



EXPERIENCES  
OF A  
PRUSSIAN OFFICER  
IN THE RUSSIAN SERVICE

DURING THE TURKISH WAR OF 1877-78

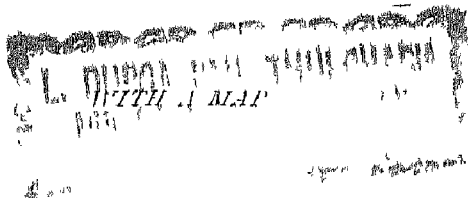
BY

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MAJOR AND BATTALION COMMANDER IN THE GRENADE REGIMENT  
OF THE PRINCE FRIEDRICH WILLIAM (2ND SILESIAN), NO. 11

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN (4TH EDITION)

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## P R E F A C E

THE following narratives have been compiled from letters which I wrote almost daily to my friends during the campaign, and also from a carefully-kept diary, in which I entered all such notes of events and observations as I was unwilling to trust to the Russian field post. I made it an invariable rule to at once write down all the more important events and conversations, however tired I might be. It was only in this way, in my opinion, that the descriptions of stirring times could adequately represent the actual facts; for if only a few days be allowed to pass, the recollection of events becomes more or less indistinct, and the imagination endeavours to make good the defects of memory. As the following account of events is intended for publication, all mention of personal relations and expressions of sentiment and feeling are naturally omitted, except



in so far as they form an essential part of the narrative.

If, especially at the beginning of my work, I dwell somewhat upon my relations with persons who have but slight connection with the strictly military events of the campaign, it is with the object of showing how any one who may be in the difficult position in which I then was is well advised to make friends under all circumstances, and thankfully to avail himself of their assistance.

Whenever I discuss Russian affairs (and I confine myself as far as possible to such as are of public notoriety), I do no violence to the sense of gratitude which I entertain towards those Russian circles with which I came in contact. Russia is too great not to be able to endure some shadow in contrast with the light.

THE AUTHOR.

BRISLAV, *June* 1892.

## NOTE BY TRANSLATOR

THE interest excited in Germany by the appearance of Graf von Pfeil's "Experiences" may be gathered from the circumstance that his little book, which was not published until June 1892, passed through four editions in about the same number of months, and is still in request.

To the English reader, and especially to the military student, the chief value of these reminiscences consists in the fact that they give an insight into the social conditions obtaining in the Russian army, at any rate fifteen years ago, and throw much light upon the mode in which military operations were then conducted ; while to the practical soldier they give many a hint which may possibly prove useful in certain contingencies.

Although holding himself responsible for the entire work in its English garb, the translator con-

siders it but fair to acknowledge his great obligation to a brother officer who, when circumstances made it impossible for him to finish the task he had commenced, generously undertook to translate the latter part of the book, and also gave him much assistance in the way of revising the spelling of Russian names in accordance with the most recent views on the subject.

LONDON, *March* 1893.

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## CHAPTER I

### FROM SILESIA TO ST. PETERSBURG

ON the 30th August 1877, while staying in Charlottenbrunn, I received a telegram from Lieut.-General von Werder, the Prussian military plenipotentiary at the Russian headquarters at Gorni-Studen, in Bulgaria, which announced to me the realization of my desire to enter the Russian army in the field. It informed me that I was posted to the 9th Infantry Division, at that time in the Balkans, but must travel to the seat of war by way of St. Petersburg, where I should receive more particular instructions.

On the 3rd September I left Gnadensfrei, where I had said good-bye to my family, procured sundry articles in Breslau which were required to complete my outfit, and started thence for my preliminary objective, St. Petersburg. As far as Posen I travelled in company with an old Pole, with whom I conversed a good deal about the insurrection of 1863.



Near us there sat a gentleman, apparently not far advanced in the fifties, who had a very pretty young wife, and soon took a lively part in our conversation. His pronunciation betrayed his Polish origin, and he showed such a knowledge of the interior organization of the insurrection, the political relations, the provision of arms, and the activity of the secret popular government, that it was obvious that he must have taken a personal part therein; and at last he even went so far as to declare that he had been wounded in an engagement. At Lissa he alighted, and my fellow-traveller told me that he was the well-known leader of the insurgents, Taczanovski. Thus I made a notable acquaintance at the very beginning of my journey.

In Kreuz I had to wait two hours, and there became acquainted with a young Silesian merchant named Bornhäuser, who had gone there as the employé of a large chemical business at St. Petersburg. Accepting his friendly invitation, I joined him, especially as he could not but be of service to me on the journey owing to my ignorance of the Russian language.

The rest of the journey in German territory presented no particular variety, and on the evening

of the 4th September, in Wirballen, I for the first time set foot on the soil of my newly adopted country. I still recall to mind how I remarked, as I pictured to myself the vastness of the Russian Empire, that the next frontier, from the point where I left Silesia, would be China. In Wirballen we changed carriages and the baggage was searched. I introduced myself as "Kamerad" to the first Russian officer that I saw, a captain of gendarmerie who fortunately spoke German, and begged him not to give me any trouble with my luggage, as I positively had nothing liable to duty. He readily and politely complied with my request, and my boxes were not even opened. After a long stoppage the train started. My travelling companions were the merchant Bornhäuser above mentioned, a friend of his, and a very talkative lady from St. Petersburg, who was acquainted with both of them, and conversed with us without ceasing. She informed us that she was a widow for the second time, that both her husbands had been married to her exactly five years, that their birthdays fell on the same day, and that even the days of their deaths corresponded. Certainly, if the tale were true, these were curious coincidences! Naturally we spoke a good deal about the state of feeling among the Russian people,

which was very depressed owing to the exceedingly unfavourable aspect of the military situation at that moment, and also to the great losses. Some instances of fraudulent transactions too were related which made one's hair stand on end.

The district through which the line ran struck me as having a miserable appearance; an endless plain and low wood, with here and there on both sides of the line villages consisting of the most wretched clay hovels. At the railway stations the greatest military activity prevailed, and trains filled with troops came and went. The feeling of the men appeared to me to be very depressed, and I missed the gay and jubilant enthusiasm that I observed in Germany in 1866, and especially in 1870; but what most particularly struck and shocked me was the total want of interest shown by the inhabitants, even when we had passed through Poland and were now in Russia proper. On the 5th September I reached St. Petersburg in the evening, and put up at the Demut Hotel, where I got a small room at a high price.

On the following day I made my first visit to the German ambassador, General von Schweinitz, to whom I was already known, and who had interested himself in getting me admitted into the Russian

army. After receiving me in a very friendly manner, he informed me that he had not yet received anything official regarding my appointment, only a letter from General von Weider, and a previous intimation from Graf Heyden, the Chief of the General Staff. I also learnt that only a few German officers had been accepted for employment, as the Russian War Minister was opposed to it on principle. The ambassador then announced my arrival to Graf Heyden, and requested him to fix the time when I should report myself to him. From the ambassador's I went to the clergyman of the Moravian Brethren, Pastor Hans, to whom I was recommended by Pastor Erxleben, then in Breslau, who was related to my family. I did not meet Pastor Hans, but saw Herr Türling, the representative of the mercantile house of the Moravian Brethren in St. Petersburg. He received me in the most friendly manner, and offered to assist me in every way during my stay in St. Petersburg. This undertaking he most faithfully observed, and to the present day I call to mind with feelings of the warmest gratitude the reception accorded to me both by him and his family, who were then staying in the country at Staraya Derevnja, about a mile from the city. On the same day I changed my abode

from the expensive hotel to a spare room in Turstig's house in St. Petersburg.

Meanwhile I had received official intimation through the German embassy of my appointment as captain in the 33rd Elefs Infantry Regiment, and I presented myself to Graf Heyden, Chief of the General Staff, an amiable and somewhat deaf gentleman, who, although he was said to speak German quite fluently, conversed with me only in French. He made particular inquiries as to the part I had taken in the Franco-German War, and then, no doubt more by way of politeness than anything else, informed me that I had been posted to one of the very best Russian regiments, and one which had just fought with great distinction at Lovcha.<sup>1</sup> He also stated that, according to his information, fighting had been going on since midday yesterday (6th September), as the Turks were anxious to retake the lost position at Lovcha. He appeared to be specially interested to ascertain what were the prevailing views in Prussia as to the course of the campaign. He kept me with him for more than half an hour, and dismissed me in the most friendly manner. An aide-de-camp accompanied me to the

<sup>1</sup> This, as I afterwards learnt, was a mistake on the part of the Chief of the General Staff, as my regiment was in a totally different part of the theatre of war.

entrance-hall, and was much more amiable to me now than he had previously been in the ante-room. In the afternoon I went to Sergyevo, having been invited to table by the German ambassador, where I dined with several Prussian gentlemen, and spent a few hours in animated conversation.

On the following day I went to the office of the General Staff in order to ascertain particulars regarding my appointment, thinking that I should be able to do there as I should have done under similar circumstances in Berlin, that is, ask some officer or other; for I wanted to know whether I was appointed as captain of the first or second class, as captain or staff-captain. There for the first time I made acquaintance with the ceremonies and red-tapism of the Russian officials. The office-messenger referred me to a clerk, and the latter to a colonel, who, however, declared that he was urgently occupied. By help of a gratuity, the clerk was induced to take me to another staff-officer, who, however, had not the slightest knowledge of my case. When I told him that I had already seen Graf Heyden, who knew all about it, and suggested that he might surely ascertain the details from him, the staff-officer was quite alarmed and intimated that that was utterly impossible; still he hoped to

be able to give me an answer to my question the next day but one. Another aide-de-camp of Graf Heyden, Colonel Shebeko, was equally unable to help me, but promised to make inquiries, after which an appointment was made for me to see Graf Heyden again the next day. What formalities with regard to even the most trivial matters!

Graf Heyden directed a colonel personally to assist me in getting my business finally settled, and in obtaining the necessary money and documents. After a great deal of trouble he procured several papers, which he said I was to present the next day in the third section of the War Office, when I should be at once settled with. On the following day I betook myself hopefully thither, and managed with my smattering of Russian, and with the help of German and French, to find my way to the sectional chief, a colonel who knew no French and very little more German. All manner of papers were placed before me, several of which I had to sign and others to take away with me, and this took up about an hour and a half.

"Now," thought I, "you'll get your money." But when the clerks had finished, I was told, "Now you must go to the Commissary-General's office,

and there you will get your business settled." I found the Commissary-General to be an amiable old gentleman, who perused all the papers with great care, made notes, and frequently nodded his head approvingly. I thought I should certainly get the money from him. Here, however, three-quarters of an hour were taken up, during which my papers wandered about through endless hands, and I was obliged to explain to the old gentleman my views about the situation at Plevna. After he had received the papers again, and I thought I had fully explained myself to him, I ventured timidly to ask him whether I could now get my money. "God forbid," said the old man; "you must now go to the office of the Commissary of War, but there you will at once get what you want." Here I found a colonel with very pronounced Jewish features, who only spoke Russian, but was very friendly. I waited nearly an hour, when he returned with an officer who spoke French, and gave me the papers back again. "What am I to do?" I asked. "You must now go to the chief pay-office, and there you will get your money."

Now that really was too bad! The pay-office was a long way off, and there again I had to wait. I explained my position, said how I had been sent



about from pillar to post, and asked if I could not get my money here on the spot. There was a great consultation. Half an hour passed, and then at last I was paid, and received 100 roubles clothing allowance, and 100 roubles travelling allowance as far as Kishinev, whence to my destination I should have to make the journey at my own expense. At the same time I was informed that my pay as captain, *i.e.* captain of the first class, amounted to 366 roubles. I had always heard people talk at home of the high rates of pay in Russia, and asked 'very gaily, "What, monthly?"' "No, yearly" was the answer, as concise as crushing.

On the 16th September I put on the Russian uniform for the first time. Serious thoughts came into my mind at that moment. I opened the Scriptures and found these words, so applicable to my case:—

"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success."  
—Joshua i. 8.

The text for the day was :—

“Take heed unto thyself.”—1 Timothy iv. 16.

As I was thus saying farewell to home in my heart, I heard close by the well-known sound, the little bell of the chapel, which was calling to service. Once more in a German church, once more in a Moravian chapel which reminded me of my dear Gnadenfrei! Pastor Hans discoursed impressively from the text, “Lord, increase my faith,” and naturally passed on to the subject of the war, and spoke of the wives, children, parents, and sisters, whose husbands, fathers, sons, and brothers were in danger. Soon, however, the prayer “for our most gracious Emperor Alexander II.” recalled me to the land where I actually was, and to which I now really belonged.

After divine service I was invited to a farewell dinner with Herr Türlig's family, at which many of the Moravian brethren were present. Towards the end of the meal, Herr Türlig spoke as follows :—  
“I believe that I not only speak in the name of all of you, but also express what is in all your hearts, when I here bid a sincere and hearty farewell to our dear friend and honoured table-companion, who leaves us to-morrow. May the Lord graciously preserve him in the great dangers

which he is about to face, and bring him back safely out of this war, so that we may again see him in our midst, and then united with his relations. May God give His blessing." Thus I left St. Petersburg with most agreeable impressions.

## CHAPTER II

### FROM MOSCOW TO BUCHAREST

NOTHING worth recording occurred on the journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow. I was very uncomfortable when, on any one's addressing me, I observed the evident astonishment and even suspicion excited by a Russian officer who could speak hardly any Russian at all. In such cases, in order to avoid further questions, I always at once covered myself with a sentence which I had learned by heart, "I have been a Prussian officer," etc. On my arrival in Moscow a young man approached me, asked my name, and then introduced himself as an employé of the Moravian business in Moscow, the representative of which, Herr E., had sent him to act as my guide during my stay in Moscow. I accompanied him to Herr E.'s house, where I knew that a room was ready for me.

To the kindness of that Moravian family I was indebted for several pleasant days in the old city of

the Tsars, which latter, however, has already been so frequently described that I shall not attempt to do so. On the 21st September I left Moscow, loaded with all kinds of tokens of good-will from my friendly host. Herr E. attended me at the railway station with one of his employés, a Russian, who was so enthusiastic about my resolution to fight for Russia, that he had a great desire to see me. At the railway station he caused quite a mob, of which I was the central figure ; for with a goblet of champagne in his hand, he drank my health in such an enthusiastic speech, that all the people present in the waiting-room, being seized with a similar enthusiasm, surrounded me, shook hands, kissed me, and in short showed their affection for me in every conceivable way, so that I was really glad when I escaped from these demonstrations of good-will and got safely into my carriage, and the train moved off.

The railway journey through southern Russia presented very little worthy of notice. The neighbourhood of Kiev, however, is very beautiful ; the Dnieper has already become a mighty broad river, its high banks are covered with trees, through whose green foliage flash the gilded cupolas of monasteries and chapels, and, after the everlasting plain, Kiev appears like an oasis in the desert. I must especially notice

the excellent restaurants at the railway stations, which offer an abundant choice of well-cooked provisions. The proprietors well know the custom of Russian travellers to make the journey less tedious by eating and drinking. Several gentlemen alighted at all the principal stopping stations, drank several schnapps, and ate heartily. At Kiev an ambulance train stopped which had been fitted out by the Empress, and was provided with every conceivable convenience. The silk coverlets on the officers' beds appeared to me to be superfluous.

On the road I made friends with a young German merchant, Cornelius by name, a nephew of the well-known professor, who was travelling with his wife to Odessa, where he managed a large business. Owing to his knowledge of the language, Herr Cornelius was of great service to me, for I frequently got into difficulties with my wretched Russian. During the journey the poor fellow was robbed of his pocket-book containing 800 roubles, passport, and railway tickets. Whether the efforts which he at once made to recover his stolen goods were successful, I do not know.

In the same compartment with us there travelled a Russian who had volunteered for the war as a cavalry officer, whose wild appearance, resembling

that of a "Rübezahl,"<sup>1</sup> struck us greatly. His box bore the name "Jean de Wissanovski," and as such he introduced himself to us. His unvarnished accounts of his military deeds gave us a very curious idea of the loyalty of Russian cavalry officers, who, as I subsequently discovered, and fortunately for Russia, do not all resemble Herr Jean de Wissanovski. After the passage of the Danube, he was orderly officer to the officer commanding his regiment, and he complained how much riding he had to do because he had two good horses, while the regimental adjutant had bad ones. However, he soon became more knowing, sold his horses, and took a bad one out of the ranks, so that the commanding officer did not send him again. He said that he had been absent from the seat of war and his regiment for several weeks, having had to carry out a certain duty in Roumania. This was finished long ago, but nevertheless he had given himself leave and spent several weeks in Russia. Just fancy all this taking place at a time when the Russian arms were in a very bad way, and when, so to speak, every man ought to have been on the spot! He also told us quite frankly that he thought the right thing to do was to draw the forage allowance for his horses in hard cash, and

<sup>1</sup> A fabulous spirit in the Riesengebirge.—TRANSLATOR.

then to compel the Bulgarians to provide the forage ; in this way he said that he had already made a very pretty sum, which we were quite ready to believe. On this subject he related instances of simply monstrous transactions, which I could subsequently corroborate from my own experience, but of which it would be superfluous to quote examples, as these Russian affairs are sufficiently well known in Germany without my doing so. Anyhow, it is a fact that many regimental, battery, and squadron commanders returned from the war rich men. Those who scraped together most money showed the least courage before the enemy. No man who becomes rich at the expense of his honour and conscience cares to expose himself to be shot after all by a stupid bullet.

We arrived at Jmerinka an hour and a half late, and then received the doubly unpleasant information that our luggage had stayed behind in Kiev, and that we should have to wait twelve hours. After having abused everybody all round, we were obliged to make the best of a bad job, and tried to kill the time as quickly as possible. It seemed as if market were being held in the little South Russian town ; vast numbers of dirtily-clothed Jews and peasants, men and women, dressed in the national costume, were



selling all manner of things. Pigs and fowls ran about among them as if they belonged to the family. There was a sort of pot-house with a small garden in which we settled ourselves, and called for beer, as that was announced on a signboard as being particularly good. They brought us a perfectly horrible liquor and a cherry tart, which latter the host, a detestable dirty Jew, assured us he had personally baked. Needless to remark both these delicacies remained untouched. Jmerinka was a point of assembly for reservists, and we paid a visit to their camp, which was not far from the place. All the men there were old soldiers, principally fathers of families, who would shortly have to march for the seat of war, and I was delighted with their quiet respectable bearing, and with the good order of their camp. The kitchens were clean, the food appeared to be good, and all took off their caps and crossed themselves before eating. Not a single officer was to be seen. At the railway station trains bringing back the wounded from the seat of war, and those carrying forward fresh troops, frequently passed each other. The men sat crowded together in the carriages, silent, unconcerned, and dejected, and there was no joyous singing; only as the train moved off, the soldiers waved their caps and shouted, "*Proshchajte, proshchajte*" ("Good-

bye, good-bye"), but no one took any notice of it. The want of interest on the part of the inhabitants was truly shocking; and this was called the war for "the holy Slav cause," which, according to the instigators of the Panslavist movement, all Russia demanded! So far from this being the case, it may safely be maintained that there was never a war in any country during the last half-century so unpopular as that with Turkey. All the much-vaunted enthusiasm for "our oppressed Bulgarian and Servian brothers," which was got up by the Panslavists, was one of the grossest swindles that history has ever known.

In Razdielnaya we had another halt for several hours. The station was crowded with troops, and the first and second class carriages were full of officers. Here I saw General Dragomirov, who was wounded at Shipka, and decorated with the Cross of St. George, and afterwards became well known as one of the most zealous among the chiefs of the Panslavists and enemies of Germany. He was surrounded by a circle of officers who were listening to his stories. Presently another officer appeared, who formed a great contrast to all the other officers, both as to his movements, appearance, and dress. His face was still fairly young-looking, and bore an

almost uniform smile ; his eyes had an expression of craftiness rather than of cleverness. This was the well-known General Graf Ignatiev, hitherto ambassador in Constantinople, one of the principal instigators of the war, and whose name at that time was in everybody's mouth. All the world knows what an important factor he still is in the Pan Slavist party. It was said that he had been granted leave of absence by the Emperor, to whose headquarters he was attached, "on account of impaired health." As a matter of fact, however, the Emperor, who was exasperated at the unfavourable course the war had hitherto taken, had dismissed him from his *entourage* as being the principal author of it ; and to the day of his death he never forgave the Graf for his very equivocal behaviour. I got myself introduced to him, and he greeted me very kindly in fluent German. He at once told me that his health was so bad, owing to continuous fever, that he had taken three weeks' leave at the special order of the Emperor ; but that if any important military operation had to be undertaken, of which there was no present prospect, the Emperor would inform him in time, so that he could return. He then added, "According to my opinion, which, however, I by no means put forward as absolutely correct, we shall make peace with Turkey

after taking Plevna ; they will concede all that I have demanded."

After conversing a little about my previous service in Prussia, he asked me, "What do you think of our various unsuccessful attempts at Plevna?"

I was rather taken back by this totally unexpected question, and replied evasively that in my opinion more troops ought to have been placed at the disposal of the Grand-Duke from the very first, in which case the reverses would certainly have been avoided. As this, however, had not been done, it would perhaps be the best thing, after the first unsuccessful assault, to commence a regular siege, not attempt to make any further assaults, but await the arrival of fresh troops from Russia. Graf Ignatiev then said, "Now look, that is exactly my view, and I have daily quarrelled about it with the General Staff, but only found opponents ; and before everybody else, Krüdener, who is responsible for our want of success."<sup>1</sup>

On my remarking that probably no one had

<sup>1</sup> General Baron Krüdener, commander of the 9th Army Corps, was undoubtedly the cause of the first defeat at Plevna, inasmuch as he gave credence to the reports of the Russian cavalry that the place was but weakly occupied, and, without taking any preparatory measures, advanced to the assault with insufficient force ; but he was certainly not answerable for the other unsuccessful attempts which were made on a much larger scale. He was no doubt made the scapegoat owing to his German name.

credited Turkey with being able to make such a stout resistance, he said, "God forbid! I have always said, long before the war broke out, that the Turkish infantry soldier on the defensive is the best in Europe."

After that he spoke of the way in which the Turks treated the Russian prisoners, and said, "They kill every prisoner. They are leading four men about in Constantinople in order to show that they spare prisoners; but those are the only ones left alive."

He next dwelt on the feeling evinced by the various organs of the German press, of which he showed that he had a very accurate knowledge. While on this subject I told him that I had in my possession a work on Turkey which had just come out, but was forbidden in Russia, which gave a very exact account of affairs there, but passed a very sharp judgment on him. "You must let me have it immediately after my return," said the Graf, and then added, "I shall keep you to your word."

All the officers present wondered who the captain could be with whom so exalted a personage as Graf Ignatiev talked with such interest, and the result was that on my departure the director of the railway station assigned me a special compartment with

three seats, and both he and all the other officials were exceptionally polite to me.

Before I had the above conversation with Graf Ignatiev, I met the mother of a man who is celebrated in a very different line of life. In a second-class compartment I saw an old, and as it seemed to me somewhat awkward, lady, who had frequently asked for tea without getting any. When I got her what she wanted, she thanked me in the most polite manner, and introduced herself to me as the mother of the composer Rubinstein. As always happens to one in such circumstances, I could not call to mind a single work of her son's, and I could only speak of his compositions in a very general way ; but I thus avoided being in the situation of the person who sat near Goethe and began to talk to him about his masterpiece *Macbeth*.

I reached Kishinev on the afternoon of the 24th September. The director of the Razdielnaya railway station, an officer of the Guards on the reserve list, happened also to be travelling thither, and accompanied me to the commandant's. The place gives one a very comfortless impression ; a city with over 100,000 inhabitants, and yet more like a large village ; pavement and footpath are unknown, and of course gas-lights are out of the question. We

drove through the principal street in deep dirt to the so-called chief hotel, which was really only a wretched tavern. On the road we met hardly any one but Jews, who here form the majority of the population, with their characteristic long garments and greasy locks. I disturbed the commandant in his afternoon nap, and, contrary to what had been promised me in St. Petersburg, received no money, but only an order for free transit as far as Ungheni, that is to the Roumanian frontier.

In the hotel I met the officers of the 1st Regiment of Hussars, which was just taking the field. On the journey I had made the acquaintance of one of the cornets, Martinov, who helped me on a certain occasion. While looking out of the window my only forage-cap was carried away by the wind, so that I was really in an awkward dilemma until the young officer procured me the cap of one of the railway officials. After that I was looked upon with even more suspicion than before, for an officer with a railway official's cap, who could not speak Russian, was a much more striking object. Not until I reached Bucharest could I get a new regulation cap. The cornet introduced me to his captain, and the latter presented me to the commanding officer, on which I made the acquaintance of

the officers, who greeted me very kindly. I was astonished to observe that there was no longing for war even among the youngest hussar officers.

The next day the director of the railway station in Kishinev told me that the commander of the brigade to which the Eleys Regiment belonged, and who had been ordered back to Russia on account of misbehaviour before the enemy, had arrived here a few days ago. On arrival he learnt that his wife was bringing an action against him for bigamy, which he knew was perfectly justified. As he could not bear this double disgrace, he had shot himself at the railway station. I afterwards heard this sad news confirmed.

On leaving Kishinev, a very superior-looking couple got into my compartment. The gentleman, who was about sixty years old, had a long gray beard, and wore the Vladimir Order round his neck.<sup>1</sup> The lady was a lively plump little woman, always in a fidget lest her husband, who frequently alighted, should miss his train. On these occasions, as she hurried along the carriage gangway, her whole figure shook, and then she always appeared to be thoroughly con-

<sup>1</sup> It is not unusual for Russians when travelling in plain clothes to wear one of their higher orders, especially the highly esteemed Vladimir Order. They are then treated with greater politeness.



tented. At first I did not take any notice of them, and began to write a letter, as I frequently did, which seemed to strike the little pair as a joke ; thus we soon got into conversation, which was carried on at first in French, and afterwards, when they knew more about me, in German. He offered me a small pie, and I gave him some pastry which had been given me in Moscow, and so we got on quite sociably together until our conversation was interrupted on our arriving at a part of the line which was indicated as dangerous, when the stout little lady was so timid that we could not talk quietly. Thanks to Herr Stroussberg's forethought, the line had been constructed on such moist ground between two halting stations, that the railway embankment could not stand the enormous traffic of the past month, and several trains had already had accidents owing to driving too fast. Earth and stones were constantly being deposited there, but without any good effect, so that the track was really very dangerous, and the train could only proceed very slowly for a full hour—slower indeed than a man can walk. Notwithstanding this, the carriage shook so much at several points, that it was impossible to stand without holding on to something. As soon as the danger was over, the little woman was again at ease, and talked

about her sons, one of whom, eleven years old, took no interest in anything but Prussia. "He must make your acquaintance," she said. I replied that I should have great pleasure in making the acquaintance of this young friend in Bucharest. I mentioned my name, and the gentleman introduced himself as Privy Councillor Struve, at one time Governor of Russian America. He informed me that from his earliest youth he had been employed as a Government official in Siberia, and in common with his wife raved about the country. He laid special stress upon the splendid natural roads, which are far better than any artificial ones in Europe, and spoke highly of the rapid method of travelling in Siberia. He said that he had made some very long journeys on duty—on one occasion 14,000 versts (about 2000 German miles) by carriage; indeed, he said that he had travelled some 160,000 versts. He had not much to say in favour of the Roumanian officials, and found fault with their corruptness and neglect of duty. A few days previously he had applied to one of the higher Roumanian officials for fifty conveyances for the Russian troops; but the latter flatly refused to assist him, and pretended that there were no carriages to be had. Struve then promised the official that he would give him personally

10 francs for each conveyance, in addition to the usual hire, and would further present him with 500 francs, and in a few hours the carriages were on the spot. He also recounted some simply incredible contracts which the Russian Government had concluded with the notorious "Army Provisioning Company," on account of the three directors, Greger, Colan, and Horvitz, also known as the "board of three Jews." The company bought all the food and forage for men and horses, themselves fixed the price thereof, and received a bonus of 10 per cent over and above the price so fixed by them. It is quite impossible to describe the rogucrics for which the way was thus paved.

At Ungheni the railway crosses the Pruth, which at that time formed the Roumanian frontier, and I there first saw Roumanian officers and soldiers. They reminded me of the French, but pleased me more by their bearing and dress. In Jassy I had occasion for the first time to be annoyed at the negligence of the Roumanian officials. The director of the railway station, who was quite a young man, smilingly pooh-pooled all complaints regarding the frightful state of confusion that everything was in at the railway station, and went on cracking nuts while superior Russian officers were speaking to him.

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Many Russian officers had to travel third class, although second-class carriages were available. Even at that time I noticed the great breach between the Russians and Roumanians, which afterwards developed into open hostility.

After a tiring journey we at length reached Bucharest. It was raining in torrents, and we had to proceed from the distant railway station to the city on foot, owing to a strike among the drosky-drivers.

## CHAPTER III

### FROM BUCHAREST TO GORNI-STUDEN

BUCHAREST justified its reputation for being one of the most expensive cities in Europe. I had to pay 11 francs a day for a single room on the fourth story, including fuel and lights. The streets were full of life, for at that time, owing to the war, people from every country came to Bucharest in order to make their fortune somehow ; and of course the Roumanian capital played a very important rôle as base of supplies of the Russo-Roumanian army. One constantly met Russian troops, as well as individual officers and men, but there was no intercourse between them and their Roumanian allies. The Russians, most unjustly, endeavoured to depreciate the performances of the Roumanians, in order that the fact might be forgotten that, after the first reverses at Plevna, when things were in such a critical state, the Russian headquarters had entreated for help from the Roumanians ; indeed, but for this,

if the Turks had only acted with a little vigour, it would have gone badly with the Russians. On the other hand, on the Roumanian side, monstrous accounts were given of the way in which the Russian corps were led, and the greatest contempt was shown for the Russian officers. Thus the worst relations imaginable existed between the two allied powers. It is related of Prince Charles of Roumania, the present king, under whose orders the investing army at Plevna was placed, that, with the thoroughness of the true Hohenzollerner, he compared the figures shown on the strength-returns of some Russian troops with the actual numbers, and found that there were serious discrepancies; there were much fewer men than were shown. The Russians were very much offended at this unexpected test.

I discovered by chance that my divisional commander, Prince Sviatopolk-Mirski, was staying in Bucharest on the sick-list, and I decided to present myself to him. As will be seen subsequently, the fact that I was personally known to the Prince and came into close contact with him was fraught with the most important consequences to my career in Russia.

Prince Mirski was then nearly fifty years of age, and had already had a brilliant career. Before he

had been an officer a year he received the Order of St. George for the operations in the Caucasus against Shamyl, subsequently became A.D.C. to the Emperor, commander of the Semenov Regiment, of the 1st Guard Infantry Brigade, General A.D.C. to the Emperor, and, with hardly 25 years' service, was Lieutenant-General and commander of the 9th Division, at the head of which he took the field. When a young man in the Caucasus, he married a Circassian ; that is, he took her, as was then the custom, on trial for a year, so that he might thoroughly know his own mind by the end of that period. He may, perhaps, have discovered a good deal to find fault with in his beauty during this time, or, which is more probable, another love enthralled him ; anyhow, he returned the lady in question to her parents, together with a sum of money, and very soon afterwards married the daughter of the last King of Georgia, a marvellously beautiful being, as he afterwards told me. But this marriage also lasted but a short time, for the young princess died, with her child, in her first confinement. For a long time Prince Mirski could not get over this loss, and it was not until many years later that he married a third time, allying himself with the daughter of an important landed proprietor ; and his marriage with her was blest with children and thoroughly happy.

He was a man of strikingly fine and distinguished appearance, but much aged during the war, owing to illness, exertion, and vexation at the earlier reverses. His manners, however, especially when talking, gave an almost youthful impression, and one could see that he must have had a very stirring life in some respects and was not at all disposed to give it up even yet.

He received me in an exceedingly kind manner, and soon began to give me a minute account of the course the war had so far taken, which, however, was interrupted by the visit of General von Drenteln, A.D.C. to the Emperor, at that time commanding the Russian lines of communication, who subsequently became more widely known and has since died. This is the General Drenteln who was afterwards entrusted with taking the precautionary measures to insure the life of the Emperor Alexander II., and whom the nihilistic criminal Mirski attempted to assassinate in St. Petersburg. I spent another evening with the Prince, when he pointed out the great danger to which the Russian army in Bulgaria had hitherto been exposed, by which he meant that, but for the petty jealousies between Suleiman and Mehemed Ali Pasha, the Russians would have been attacked simultaneously from three sides, and either driven



back over the Danube or made prisoners ; and indeed this danger existed even now, but in a few days the whole of the Guard Corps and other reinforcements would arrive at the seat of war. Subsequently, in Constantinople, Mehemed Ali Pasha fully corroborated all that Prince Mirski had said to me, and on the incapable and cowardly Suleiman he threw the entire responsibility that certain victory had been wrested out of the hands of the Turkish army.

On the following day I went to the commissariat office in the Cusa barracks, so called after the murdered Prince, in order to get travelling-allowance, for, as I apprehended, I was bound to claim it as far as my regiment, that is as far as the Balkans, especially as it would only be possible to procure conveyance at very great expense. However, they told me that I could only claim it to the Danube, and that all I was entitled to was 10 roubles ; the rest of the journey I must pay for out of my own pocket. The officer who had to pay me was then asleep, and it was only on my repeated order that his servant decided to wake him. I heard some abusive language, and the sound as of something thrown at the wall, after which the door was opened to me. As can be imagined, the officer received me very unamiably, which, however,

was a matter of indifference to me, shoved his hand into a large chest that stood by his bedside, and pulled out 10 brand new silver roubles. I wished him a good sleep and took my leave of him. I may remark incidentally that it was discovered at the end of a year, on what grounds I have never been able to understand, that those 10 roubles ought not to have been paid, and I had to refund them.

In the hotel I made the acquaintance of Prince Alexander of Battenberg, afterwards Prince of Bulgaria, who was having some stomachic complaint cured in Bucharest. He had only just returned from the seat of war, and expressed his great dissatisfaction with the leading of the Russian troops, especially of the cavalry ; for although there were sixteen cavalry regiments on the road from Plevna to Lovcha, the Turks were able to send many hundred waggons full of provisions to the besieged city along this very road. I drove with Prince Battenberg to Herr von Alvensleben's, at that time German consul-general in Bucharest, where we dined. It was mentioned there that the Russians would gladly make the Prince the future Prince of Bulgaria ; but the young Prince strenuously opposed the idea, and declared that he would never

accept the position. When subsequent events falsified those words, I remarked to myself that the young man, who then appeared so innocent, possessed at any rate so much aptitude for diplomacy that he knew how to employ language in order to conceal his thoughts.

But now I had to hasten to the seat of war, and I therefore made my stay in Bucharest as short as possible, and took my departure from the city at the Philaret railway station with a ticket for Giurgevo. The train travelled very slowly and made long stoppages everywhere, as it had constantly to take up troops. At one station I noticed that two gentlemen observed me continually and were talking about me ; at last one of them addressed me in German, and said that he had made a bet with the other, who was an Englishman, that I must at some time or other have been a Prussian officer. On my replying to him, he was very much pleased to have won his bet.

We reached Giurgevo at 2 P.M. The Turks had just given up firing upon the city from Rushchuk, which was opposite, which they had been doing every day without any particular advantage ; but on seeing the destruction that had already been caused, and the Turkish intrenchments and camps

which were visible on the other bank of the Danube, I felt that I was at last at the seat of war.

This was the anniversary of my wedding-day !

Between Giurgevo and Simnitsa, which was the terminus of the bridge over the Danube to Sistova, there was a sort of mail service, and, following the advice of an expert, I had telegraphed to secure two seats, which at any rate was much cheaper than hiring a carriage for oneself ; moreover, I felt sure that I should thus be able to convey my baggage as well as myself. I very nearly repented later on that I had essayed to travel in the darkness by the so-called "post," instead of passing the night in Giurgevo and driving by day ; but, still, I wanted to lose as little time as possible.

About 3 P.M. we drove off, I being the only passenger. The conveyance was a sort of open square box on four wheels, of course without springs, with six horses, four in front and two behind. On the box sat a dirty-looking man, who called himself "Conductor" ; the driver was a Slovak or a gipsy. So the journey began, as fast as the horses could go. The distance from Giurgevo to Simnitsa is about 52 kilometers, so that I had a good many hours before me, especially as, on account of the wet as well as of the Turkish bullets, we could not take the

shortest road close along the bank of the Danube. At first the route fascinated me very much. The high maize-fields along the Danube hid us from the view of the Turks, but with the naked eye I could see their strong works on the opposite high bank, and the busy life in the camp before Rushchuk, while with the telescope I could distinguish groups of soldiers. According to what was told me in Giurgevo, the first part of the road we took was usually fired upon pretty freely, as the Turks suspected that troops were there ; I waited in vain, however, and not a single shot fell.

Soon both the road and country became wretchedly bad ; it was what is called a natural road, that is, it had been formed by many vehicles travelling over the same ground, and it had no lateral boundary. As far as the eye could reach, nothing was to be seen but an endless steppe, broken here and there by maize-fields ; no trees, no bushes, not even stones were to be seen. The coachman drove at full speed, taking no notice of the furrows caused by the shrinkage of the mud in drying. As the conveyance, as before stated, had no springs, the shaking resulting from the continual bounding of the carriage could hardly be borne. As long as we were near the Danube, I frequently

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saw Russian piquets, each of which had a beacon ready, of easily inflammable material, so that, in case of a sudden attack by the Turks, all the neighbouring Russian troops could be at once warned. Between the piquets, the reliefs of the posts moved, so that, at the commencement of the journey, I had before me a scene of active warfare. But we soon left the Danube, the road became very lonely, and we did not meet a single human being ; and so the carriage pounded on in mad haste through the desert steppe. Not being quite certain of my respected friend who was in possession of the box-seat, I buckled on my revolver in a very conspicuous manner and loaded it. The only living creatures that I saw were large gray eagles, called carrion-kites, which here and there were sitting on the road or hovering over us. Once we passed some mud huts, where a similar conveyance with two commissariat officials overtook us. Meanwhile it had become quite dark, and after a journey of between four and five hours the carriage pulled up at a solitary hut, around which a number of horses were wandering about loose ; I could not see whether they were fenced in or not. We were soon surrounded by a rabble of gipsy-like beings, who emerged from no one knows where, and changed driver and horses. The latter operation

was performed by a fellow driving six of the horses that were roaming about towards the carriage, and putting them to. The other carriage now drove in front; its conductor having a lantern in his hand, which, although it was pitch dark, had to serve as a light for both carriages. My new driver, with whom I was now alone in the carriage, was, as I discovered on changing horses, a hideous-looking Slovak, who of course spoke only Roumanian and not a word of Russian.

Then the journey began again; and what a journey it was!

In front galloped the carriage with the lantern, and after it mine; but I could see nothing whatever of the road. The carriage took tremendous leaps, so that I thought every moment that it must be smashed, and there was not a living being to be seen.

Then I saw in front of me a glimmering surface, either a pond or a river. The first carriage dashes through, and mine follows; the water splashes up high, rises above the wheels, and penetrates into the carriage. Next, at the same speed, through boggy banks into a similar pond, and again into a third. The distance from the other carriage increases; the light from the lantern, our only gleam of light,

becomes gradually fainter. My Slovak draws himself up on the box, lashes the six horses, which is the only way to make them fly, and shrieks and curses in the most horrible tones. The country begins to be undulating, and the carriage is consequently always on the point of capsizing, and it seems as if the speed alone prevented its doing so.

Thank God! Not so very far off we can see lights. But what is it? A gipsy camp, through which go we must. Wild figures press towards the carriage and follow it for a considerable distance. Solitary stars show themselves in the heavens, but they only make the darkness more perceptible. Suddenly—halt! a trace has broken, and has to be mended; and then—the lantern in front is no more to be seen! The driver curses fearfully and lashes into the horses, which he can do. It was clear to me that we had lost our way, and now he was only driving at random and trusting to luck.

Alone in this darkness, in this vast plain! Solitude in a forest is perhaps under certain circumstances moving, indeed it may be terrifying, but there is poetry in it. In such an endless plain, however, one feels much more lonely than in the forest; it is nothing but bare prose.



So the chase continued across country, and at last, after some twenty minutes, we again caught sight of our lantern. Soon, too, I saw lights in the far distance. Simnitsa lay before us, and, for the first time in this war, I heard the distant thunder of cannon, probably from Rushchuk. At no great distance I heard a noise like the rattle of a carriage. My conveyance stopped for a moment, and then from the same direction came the terrified cry of a man, followed by the shrill scream of a woman. This seemed to make an impression even on my horrible driver. My first thought was to drive towards them, but I at once said to myself that in this pitch-darkness it would be impossible to leave the road. We should certainly not have reached the scene of the probably hideous deed that was being perpetrated, and we should quite as certainly have lost our way.

At last, late in the night, we arrived in Simnitsa ; and my limbs felt as if they were battered to pieces after this frightful and exciting journey. In the miserable hotel, the only one in the city, disorder reigned supreme. In the front room, through thick clouds of tobacco-smoke, with which was mingled the disgusting odour of bad brandy, one could see half-drunken officers and men, Jews and loose women,

and could hear laughter, shrieks, and oaths. In a back room, officers were playing at cards, and apparently for high stakes, as a pile of gold and paper money lay in front of the keeper of the bank. No accommodation of any kind was to be had, but a German-speaking Jew procured me a cold damp room in a small house outside the city for 15 francs a night. Still I was really very lucky to have found a lodging at all.

At an early hour the next day I set to work to get a carriage to take me over the Danube bridge to Sistova. In this I was helped by a man who spoke a little German, and who said that he was a Servian student, and had taken part in the Servo-Turkish war. After a great deal of trouble he succeeded in procuring a vile closed rattle-trap for 20 francs, which, as I afterwards learnt, was very cheap, although the distance was hardly 5 kilometers. It was not easy to cross the field-bridge over the broad three-armed river, for it was constantly being traversed by troops, provision trains, single horsemen, and carriages, in the order of succession laid down by the bridge-commander on the hither side. It was to me incomprehensible why the Russians had not long ago thrown another bridge to facilitate the enormous traffic. Sometimes carriages had to wait for hours

if the bridge-commander, a staff officer, was in a bad humour, and would not push them in somewhere. I helped myself with a little subterfuge, and ordered my Servian driver to report to the bridge-commander that I wished to be let through without delay, as I was carrying important letters for headquarters. The major no doubt thought that a Russian officer who could not speak Russian must be something quite out of the common, saluted me with great politeness, and allowed me to precede all the other carriages. In front of me the Precobrajensk Regiment was crossing the bridge. Who would have dreamed of my belonging to it in less than half a year!

On the right bank the Russians had done absolutely nothing towards keeping in order the road which was so much used, and which indeed was so bad that I alighted and went on foot. I cannot to this day understand why the Turks gave up these steep banks, which apparently could never have been captured, after such a slight engagement, when it was possible for them to at once bring up a very strong force. The passage must certainly have been totally unexpected by them. Even in Sistova itself it was hardly possible to get along in the steep, narrow, and badly paved streets. The whole place was

blocked up with carriages of every kind, and no one troubled himself to maintain order. There was not the slightest indication of any orders for regulating the traffic having been issued by the Russian military authorities. A few weeks previously, when the headquarters were obliged to retire from Tirnova to Gorni-Studen after the first reverse at Plevna, a sudden panic occurred among the troops in and around Sistova, resulting from false reports of the Cossacks as to a Turkish attack, and everybody fled in the wildest disorder across the bridge. According to all accounts, the most incredible instances of confusion, absence of orders, and irregularity then occurred, which make it evident how easy it would have been for the Turks to annihilate or capture the entire Russian forces had they but acted vigorously and in a combined manner.

My first visit was to the provost-marshal in Sistova, a lieutenant-colonel, to whom I had a letter of introduction from Prince Mirski. Owing to this letter, that very busy man was of great service to me, placed a room at my disposal in his own house, recommended me to the kind offices of his wife, who had followed him to the seat of war, and himself went out in order to procure me a conveyance to Gorni-Studen. I had a simple breakfast with the

wife, a very coquettish lady, and with whom I got on very well in French. She appeared to have a very special admiration for Prince Mirski, for her eyes quite sparkled when I spoke of him. After a few hours I was able to proceed on my journey. In the blocked-up main street I met several gentlemen who expressed their pleasure to me, in German, at seeing a Russian officer with the Iron Cross. I introduced myself to them, and they greeted me most heartily as a fellow-countryman. One of them hastened to buy a bottle of cognac, which he handed to me in the carriage.

The road to Gorní-Studen was very pretty, the neighbourhood being much finer than on the left bank of the Danube. On both sides of the road the troops of the Guard Corps were encamped in long lines. On the previous day, when greeting some detachments of the Guards there, the Emperor had said to them, with a sorrowful expression, that he had never expected that it would be necessary to bring up his Guards.

I did not reach headquarters at Gorní-Studen until it was perfectly dark. The sea of white tents, lighted up by the camp-fires, was a fascinating sight ; but it was very difficult for me, who knew next to nothing of the language, to ask my way. At last I

saw a large canteen tent, in which some ten officers of the Guard Hussars were sitting, drinking champagne. I soon came to terms with the proprietors, a Frenchman and an Alsatian, and got permission to pass my first night in this tent.

## CHAPTER IV

### AT THE TSAR'S HEADQUARTERS

THE next morning my first visit was to the Prussian military plenipotentiary, General von Werder, A.D.C. to the Emperor, who had accompanied the Tsar on the campaign. It was not easy to find one's way in the great city of tents, for that is the only way to describe the headquarter camp of the Emperor and the Grand-Duke, and, as I sought General von Werder's tent, I had to pass through the immediate *entourage* of the Emperor, generals, and aides-de-camp, who were awaiting his arrival. I felt very much embarrassed, unaccustomed as I was to my present uniform, at having to make my way through all those personages, for they then made a great and powerful impression on me, which in subsequent years was no longer the case. Moreover, the Iron Cross and my Prussian decorations drew all eyes towards me, which increased my embarrassment. At last, however, I found General von Werder's tent,

close to the little house in which the Emperor lived. The General informed me to whom I must report myself, but could give me no idea of what they intended to do with me. Judging from the first telegram (that I was appointed to the 9th Division), I had erroneously hoped that I should be attached to the staff of that division. As things turned out, it was very lucky for me that this was not the case; for it was only owing to the difficult position in which I was placed, at the commencement of my service, that I was able to lay the foundation for my subsequent and very fortunate career. General von Werder intimated that I might as well join my regiment as soon as possible after reporting myself to those persons only to whom I must necessarily do so. I should have liked to report myself to the Emperor, who no doubt would have treated me in the most gracious manner, as was so frequently the case subsequently. On the other hand, he ultimately agreed with my view, that I should await the return of the Grand-Duke Nicholas from Plevna, which must take place in a few days. It was undoubtedly of importance to me that I did await his return, and I am now very glad that I did so.

Of all the personages in high positions to whom I now reported myself, the only one whom I met was



the War Minister Miliutin, who spoke a few friendly words to me. The very powerful War Minister of Alexander II., who had held that position for many years, and was then sixty-one years of age, was a little insignificant-looking person, with white hair and beard, but had the reputation of being a very able man, which indeed was the truth. Still it is open to us now to form the opinion that the Russian military system has nothing much to thank him for. Owing to his liberalizing innovations, which especially made themselves felt in the war schools, he contributed greatly to the disintegration of the corps of officers, which stood upon a distinctly higher level under the Emperor Nicholas I. than under his successor ; for if their scientific training was perhaps somewhat less thorough, the officers of the Emperor Nicholas I. were much more imbued with the sentiment of unconditional loyalty to the Emperor and devotion to duty than their equally superficially educated comrades, who after a few years forget in the monotonous round of regimental life all that they learnt in the war school, and at the same time develop still further the liberalism which has been inculcated upon them, but which they have understood wrongly, and which is totally inapplicable to Russian conditions. The red Panslavism in a con-

siderable section of the Russian corps of officers, especially under certain personages already holding high positions, is due to Miliutin's school.

When in St. Petersburg, I was referred to one of the imperial aides-de-camp, for whom I had to bring several things. During the course of my frequent visits to him he entered into very detailed accounts, and thus I came to know of the then existing and almost incredible feeling of despondency, the result of the signal reverses in front of Plevna. If a secret vote had at that time been taken among the officers as to whether the war should be continued or not, undoubtedly three-fourths would have voted to return to Russia, and to leave the *Bratushki* ("little brothers"), *i.e.* the Bulgarians, who were being emancipated entirely against their own wishes, to take care of themselves. Even in the countless crowd of generals, aides-de-camp, and orderly officers at the imperial headquarters, they were heartily weary of the war, especially as all those do-nothings had long since been plenteously covered with decorations. It is impossible to imagine a headquarters with more people who absolutely did nothing whatever than was the case with the Emperor's staff, and, on a somewhat smaller scale, with that of the Commander-in-chief Grand-Duke Nicholas. It is of

course always best when a ruler himself leads his army against the enemy. If, however, he does not do so, he ought not to remain constantly at the seat of war; for he is then himself in every respect the greatest obstacle to the proper course of operations. He requires a strong detachment for his protection, and drags about with him a nest of place-hunters, who would like to receive decorations without even hearing the sound of a bullet, and afterwards, when the war is over, claim and often obtain the best appointments. It is setting aside all principles of justice when a man, because he happens to be in the train of the sovereign, which surely is of itself a sufficient distinction, yet claims a special reward on that account. The conditions prevailing at the Tsar's headquarters were very instructive. The Emperor Alexander III. had plenty to do in the earlier years of his reign to remove, from the high positions into which they had managed to force themselves, those numerous personages who had got quite out of the way of doing any duty, and were only doing harm to the service.

The Emperor's aide-de-camp pictured the events to be expected in the Balkans in not very rosy colours; he considered that there were no laurels to be gathered there, and advised me rather to try to

get myself appointed to the regiment "Prince Charles of Prussia," which was before Plevna. He said that the troops around that place were more under the eyes of the Tsar and the Grand-Duke than were those in the Balkans ; that that regiment had suffered great losses among the officers, so that there was a good prospect of promotion and distinction ; moreover, the present commander was a very nice man, spoke French, and, as he had never commanded infantry, but had always been in the cavalry, would certainly be very glad to have a former Prussian infantry officer at his side. I replied that I would go with pleasure wherever they sent me, but I thought it was not my business, when I was only just on the point of entering the Russian service, to take any such steps on my own account.

After the great losses suffered by the infantry, it was a frequent occurrence that they were commanded by cavalry officers. Many ambitious aides-de-camp of the Emperor—and the Emperor Alexander II. certainly had about three hundred of them—owed brilliant careers to the fact that they commanded a corps for a short time on service.

My stay in Gorni-Studen was at first very dull and lonely, for I hardly knew any one, and lived in the midst of men whose language I did not under-

stand, and who did not trouble themselves about me. Thus I longed for the return of the Grand-Duke, and until then I roamed about the camp perfectly useless and without anything to do. Gorni-Studen was a miserable little Bulgarian village consisting of a few wretched mud huts, which were all taken up by the staffs and offices, but were not anything like sufficient for the excessively numerous staffs. The little house occupied by the Emperor and the War Minister was put into a more or less tolerable state of repair. The two headquarters, which were fundamentally at variance with one another, were separated by a ravine and lived quite apart. Next to the tents of the Grand-Duke's headquarters, and separated by a camp street, were the camps of the headquarters guard and of many detachments, for the presence of the Emperor rendered it necessary to have troops in the vicinity which would have been much better employed elsewhere. Every day I witnessed the exercises of these troops, which consisted exclusively of the manual exercise, wheeling and such like, executed with the very smallest amount of zeal imaginable, and which were performed in order to kill time. Once I saw the Emperor, a few paces off, looking much aged, weak, and full of care ; the want of success of his troops, which he had considered quite

impossible, had made a deep impression upon him, and had broken him down both in mind and body. He lived here quite as a soldier, and took his meals in common with the headquarters staff in a large tent. He had already been several times to the Plevna position, and especially had been an eye-witness of the great assault of the Turkish works which was undertaken on his name-day (11th September), which was defeated with such fearful loss, and ultimately induced the Russian authorities to decide upon the only proper course, viz. to lay formal siege to Plevna, and to entrust the conduct of the siege to General Tottleben, the hero of Sebastopol. Meanwhile, Tottleben had already arrived before Plevna, and was an object of envy to the Grand-Duke Nicholas, whom he afterwards succeeded in the supreme command in San Stefano, when the situation was very difficult.

My only place of resort was the canteen tent, where from time to time very varied scenes met the eye. The tent was large and gave plenty of room for several tables, a bar, and store-room. At the bar sat the proprietor, M. Gauthier, a native of the south of France, the very picture of a French sutler, a man between fifty and sixty years of age, who had already gone through the campaign in Italy in the

same capacity, and was sutler in the Emperor Napoleon's headquarters camp during the Franco-German war, where, however, he struck his tent too late, and was consequently shut up in Metz. It was very amusing to hear him talking about these times in his lively way. An out-and-out imperialist, he roundly abused the treachery of the generals and ministers who had urged the good and well-meaning Emperor to war. If, however, things had been conducted according to his, M. Gauthier's, views, the French would have gained the day even after Wörth ; he had predicted the whole thing, but no one would ever listen to him. I loved talking with him, and he quite took me to his heart when I cured him of fever with some quinine from my field medicine-chest. Still his partiality for me by no means prevented his asking simply impudent prices, which, as the canteen tent was the only place of resort open to me, I was obliged to pay, much against the grain as it was. The cheapest item, bread and butter with cheese, from which, however, the butter was generally missing, cost 1 franc ; a bottle of beer,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  francs ; the cheapest bottle of plain country wine, 5 francs. The guests were of the most varied character. Officers of the Guard, with their uniform looking as new and smart as when in the Nevski Prospekt at St. Peters-

burg, especially Guard Hussars in their gold-braided red tunics, scarcely distinguishable from the Prussian Guard Hussars. These were M. Gauthier's favourite clients, for the champagne flowed in streams at their table, especially when Duke Constantine of Oldenburg was among them. Montenegrins in their magnificent picturesque national costumes, with a numerous assortment of weapons in their broad girdles; Circassians in long black or brown coats, richly embroidered with silver, and very much like dressing-gowns, cartridge-pouches on their breasts, and peaked lamb's-skin caps on their heads. M. Gauthier did not like these customers, for it was difficult to explain oneself to them, as they were perfectly ignorant of the French language; they threatened freely, were dissatisfied and quarrelsome, and consumed very little. Line officers of all arms, who felt depressed in the presence of officers of the Guard, and formed a very strong contrast to them, appearing as they often did in their ragged uniform, fresh from the field, and with long and unkempt hair and beard; foreign officers, French, Austrian, Roumanian, Servian—there was at that moment no other Prussian officer at headquarters but General von Werder—even a Japanese officer came frequently there, who could speak no language but his own, and did not attempt



to learn another. Naturally he was a very mute guest, and seemed to feel all the better for it. At the commencement of the last battle of Plevna, when the bullets began to whistle, he lay down behind a tree and calmly went to sleep, apparently in the consciousness that as the representative of a neutral power he was under protection.

Further, representatives of the press of all countries were to be met with in the canteen tent, recognisable by the bands on their sleeves, on which were shown the titles of their respective newspapers and the numbers under which they were registered at headquarters. There were said to be about sixty of them, and the highest number I saw was forty-six. With of course a few exceptions, these gentlemen did not make a very agreeable impression. They were full of their own importance, and many of them boasted of their evidently self-invented deeds of heroism. One recognised in them at first sight the battlefield-loafer, doing all he can to look as warlike as possible. Several of them wore Russian war medals, for which they had been recommended by generals who liked to see their names made prominent in the newspapers. Skobelev in particular belonged to this class, and owed not the least part of his fame to the reporters,

whom he treated very well and recommended for decorations. Many of these gentlemen, especially the English, were very highly paid, and gave themselves corresponding airs.

Among all these customers at the canteen tent there glided about two exceedingly impudent waiters, in dirty jackets, who spoke all languages, but not one decently. One heard them abused constantly in the most varied tongues, without, however, its appearing to make any particular impression upon them. Numerous ownerless dogs ran about the tent, who picked up spare bones from the guests, and in exchange therefor parted with their superfluous fleas. In addition to all this the dirt on the damp floor was such that it was quite impossible to sit in the tent without having on waterproof boots. The confused roar of voices never ceased, but high above it all was heard the shrill voice of M. Gauthier constantly scolding his waiters. The latter, however, acted as if they did not understand it, maintaining that they only knew "well-bred French."

From time to time I made more or less notable acquaintanceships in the canteen tent. Thus on one of my first evenings I came to know a certain Herr Tardent, from Switzerland, who was voluntarily

accompanying the Red Cross Society. For ten years he had lived in Russia, and devoted himself to the manufacture of wine and to vine-culture. At that time, when the Caucasian and Crimean wines were as good as they were unknown, Herr Tardent foresaw a great future for them, and had entered upon some large undertakings, so that I feel sure that now that those wines are yearly becoming better known, Herr Tardent, with his great zeal and knowledge of the business, must have become a rich man, which I wish from the bottom of my heart may be the case. The first time I saw him was in the company of the wife of that provost-marshal at Sistova, of whom I have previously spoken. From her coquettish and pronounced behaviour she attracted the attention of every one in the tent, especially as this visit by a lady was something quite new. She seemed to be on very intimate terms with Herr Tardent, and kept up such an insipid and silly conversation with him that I left the table. Subsequently, however, I found that he was a very well-informed man, and he explained to me many things regarding the sanitary arrangements in the Russian army, and the organization and working of the Red Cross Society, which were really worth knowing. After a few days I accepted

his invitation to put up in his *kibitka*. This was of exactly the same sort as those which the Kirghiz use in the Steppes, and consisted of felt boards placed together over a sort of wooden hurdle-frame. Every night we made a fire in the centre, the smoke from which escaped through an opening in the roof. If the necessary material for making them is to be had, these kibitkas are far preferable to canvas tents. They can be erected and struck very quickly, and they are both cooler in summer and warmer in winter than tents are. The Red Cross Society carried a good many of them with them.

Through Herr Tardent's mediation, I was permitted to visit the great field-hospital in Gorni-Studen. The Emperor visited it daily, always conversed with some of the wounded, and distributed decorations and gratuities among them. Although it will be understood from this that it was the best kept hospital at the seat of war, still there was a good deal of fault to be found with it. Above all there was an absence of any loving care for the wounded and sick, and it lacked that cleanliness which is absolutely necessary in a hospital. For example, bandages covered with blood and matter were lying about all over. The wounded were not separated from the sick, which owing to the

dysentery that prevailed might easily have been, and in fact was, a source of danger. Tardent told me that the surgeons were far too hasty in their decisions to amputate limbs, and that most of those whose limbs were amputated died. "That is all food for the earth," said a German-speaking surgeon to us, as he led us past a tent containing the severely wounded. An unfortunate fellow, whose knee was shattered by a bullet, groaned pitifully when an opening was made to let out the pus. The surgeon, instead of speaking a few kindly words to comfort him during the painful operation, said very angrily, "You yell like an old woman!" There was a great dearth of surgeons. For the 600 wounded and sick there were only three medical officers, and that in a hospital visited daily by the Emperor. What would it be like in the others? Anyhow the surgeons were assisted by the sisters of the Red Cross. Herr Tardent pointed out one to me, a Miss Romanov, a strikingly beautiful girl, who had only a short time before devoted herself to this service after giving up a very fast life. A penitent Magdalene immediately after reformation! The Society of the Red Cross did great things during the war, although nothing was provided for it in time of peace, and it had to contend with the

greatest difficulties, among which the Russian officials were not the least. The Emperor was always kept in the dark as to the numbers of the wounded, which were concealed from him. After the fights at Plevna, the wounded were taken by a circuitous route, on a bad rough road, to Sistova, so that they should not encounter the Emperor, and that he might not observe any disorder during the crossing, as he had once done.

Among the persons whose acquaintance I made in the canteen tent, there was also a Roumanian colonel, whose name sounded something like Genrillir ; I never quite understood it. He had passed part of his youth in Potsdam, and indeed declared that he had been three months with the Guard Hussar regiment there, but in what capacity was never clear to me. At the present time he was attached to the headquarters of the Grand-Duke. Like all the Roumanian officers with whom I became acquainted, he very much resembled a Frenchman, and he also spoke in a lively French way regarding the events of the war, and especially the state of affairs about Plevna. Tottleben had spoken very indignantly in his presence about the Russian earthworks, and ordered them to be pushed considerably forward. The Roumanians were excellent at earthworks,

which even the Russian officers, who were not too friendly disposed towards them, were ready to admit.

The Turks also, according to the description of the Colonel, executed excellent earthworks around Plevna, in doing which, however, they made themselves very comfortable. The inhabitants, especially the Bulgarians, were compelled to work under the surveillance of soldiers, even under the enemy's fire; and any one who tried to run away was bayoneted. The service of security in the works was only partially carried out by real soldiers. Osman Pasha had armed the Turkish inhabitants who fled to Plevna with rifles, instructed them in the use of them, and their duty was simply to open a rapid fire in the corresponding direction the moment any hostile detachment showed itself. If the affair turned out to be a serious attack, the regular line soldiers, who were well rested and abundantly provided with ammunition, turned out and took part in the fight. It cannot be denied that there is much to be said in favour of this method of warfare; but it certainly would only be possible in a war of that sort.

After many days of expectation, I heard at last that the return of the Grand-Duke was fixed for the

6th October. I determined to report myself to him as soon as possible, and seized the opportunity when he was holding a march-past of the troops of the 1st Guard Infantry Division. At this parade I was again struck with the utter absence of enthusiasm, and the dislike to the war. In the canteen tent I frequently heard officers of the Guard, who had not yet been under fire, making use of such expressions as : " Ah, if I were only lucky enough to be back in St. Petersburg ;" or, " I'd give anybody a good round sum to give me a slight flesh wound," etc. The wounded in hospital frequently spoke in indignant terms of the officers, which as a rule is certainly not the habit of the Russian soldier.

As soon as the march-past was over, I approached the Grand-Duke, who received me very kindly and remembered seeing me in Potsdam. For the rest he referred me to his aide-de-camp, Colonel Skalon. The latter told me, the next day, that the Grand-Duke did not wish me to join a staff, but considered that it would be better if I began my service in a regiment. To this end Colonel Skalon gave me two letters, one for my regimental commander and one for Lieutenant-Colonel Skugarevski of the General Staff, who was then commanding a battalion of the Elets Regiment. Both of these were directed to look



after me, and after a time a report upon me was to be made to the Grand-Duke. I was very pleased at this decision, being quite of the Grand-Duke's opinion that I ought to commence service under the difficult conditions that obtain in a regiment, as this was the only way in which I could acquire a knowledge of the language and of the details of the service.

After what I had learnt of the state of affairs in the Russian army during my stay at headquarters, I took a much more serious view of my position than before. The Emperor's aide-de-camp, above mentioned, had given me an account of the line officers which inspired me with very little confidence, and he told me much about the cruelties that were being practised, in which the Russians were very little behind the Turks. After the storming of the Grivitsa redoubt in front of Plevna, all the Turkish defenders were bayoneted, and no prisoners were made, although the Turks begged for mercy on their knees; and the cruelties were ordered by generals, such as Skobelev. Such ignorance prevailed in the staffs, that they could not even tell me the name of the officer temporarily commanding my division; it was not known exactly where my regiment was in the Balkans, and I was told that

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I should find that out in Tirnova from the headquarters of the 11th Army Corps.

But now I had nothing more to learn at headquarters, and was moreover delighted to be able to leave. Through Herr Tardent's good offices, I was able to join a commissariat official who was ordered to Tirnova, and it was only in this way that I could possibly get on by carriage. On the morning of the 10th October I was on the road.

## CHAPTER V

### FROM GORNI-STUDEN TO THE BALKANS

THE commissariat official, as I soon observed, was an uncultivated, vulgar man. He only spoke Russian, but still I could not make myself understood by him. On the road we met a Russian priest, whom he appeared to know, for he cracked the most commonplace jokes with him, and the priest did the same. I offered the latter a cigarette, but the reverend gentleman at once took half a dozen.

The road was bad, and nothing whatever had been done to keep it in order. Here, and subsequently, I was struck with the utter absence of halting-places, and one never feels the want of such things more than when one suffers from it personally. Although the road to Tirnova was the most important artery of communication through the seat of war, no one troubled himself about the means of forwarding individual officers and men, so that if they did not chance to be furnished with a carriage, as I was,

they either had to procure one at a very high price, or they continued to remain wherever they were, which was more frequently the case. The whole of Bulgaria was at that time inundated with loafing Russian soldiers, who were a real plague in the land. No one gave detailed information regarding a road to be taken, and of course there were no guide-posts. Every one had to find his own way by himself, which, under certain circumstances, was extremely difficult, especially for any one who was not well acquainted with the language.

About 3.30 P.M. we arrived at Poskalinets, a considerable village half-way to Tirnova. I wanted to go on at once, but my companion, who knew the road, considered this impossible, both on account of the fatigue of the horses and the unsafety of the road in the dark; besides which, the three soldiers who accompanied the carriage on foot appeared to be much knocked up. So I made up my mind to pass the night there, and looked about for a suitable house, while a crowd of very uncomfortable-looking Bulgarians, with long knives in their girdles, surrounded our carriage. My companion made inquiries regarding inhabitable houses, and while doing so was so brutal and incautious as to strike an old Bulgarian, who did not understand him, on

the face. This made the situation rather critical, for the Bulgarians became much excited over his coarse act. I could see them laying their heads together and talking with great animation. They certainly were not friendly disposed towards their "liberators." I expostulated with the official regarding his conduct, as far as I was able to do in Russian, and at any rate the villagers understood it quite well; at the same time I buckled on my revolver in a very conspicuous way, and determined that I would rather drive farther on than pass the night in one of the peasants' houses, for I was the only one of the party who was armed, the soldiers not even having their bayonets. As there was a church in the village, I concluded that there must also be a priest there, and accordingly to him I betook myself. The reader must not picture to himself a German pastor's house, but merely a miserable hut with only one room, but that very cleanly kept. The priest, who only spoke Bulgarian, was still a young man. He was not dressed in his clerical costume, the long black garment, but was clothed just like a peasant; nevertheless he presented a very worthy and modest appearance.

I made myself comfortable in his room, which, according to Oriental custom, had no chairs or other

furniture to sit upon, set up my camp table and stool, and laid out my camp bed. All these things, as also a tent, I had bought in Gorni-Studen. The priest had no lights, so I lighted one of my candles, and asked him to make some tea from my store ; I also invited him to take tea with me, which he accepted in his quiet, modest manner. I asked the commissariat official to join us, but he had stretched himself out on a mat, and was too lazy even to raise his hand. It was not until he saw that I had a bottle of cognac with me that he became at all lively.

I got on as well as possible with the priest, for Bulgarian has a great resemblance to Russian. He explained to me that the village was almost entirely Christian, there being only twenty Turkish houses, which, however, were abandoned. My companion, who became more unbearable every minute, treated the priest in the most insulting way, made him fetch water for him and perform the most menial offices, even to the extent of pulling off his boots. It says much for the subordinate position of the Bulgarian and also Russian village priests that this Bulgarian priest so quietly performed these servile duties, and that a Russian official could have the impertinence to require them from a minister of his own religion.

The night passed quietly, and we were on the road early. At first the carriage rolled but slowly along in the usual Bulgarian mud. The condition of the road, which the Russians ought to have had repaired months before, was such that any movement of troops on it on a large scale would have been impossible. Here and there were still to be seen traces of Gurko's expedition, for, as we know, he had traversed the Balkans a few months previously, and been obliged to retire on account of receiving no reinforcements. On both sides of the road lay fallen horses, nearly gnawed away to the bone, and round each were to be seen dogs, birds of prey, and crows, which were enjoying themselves in common over the remains of the unsavoury feast. We also met some two hundred homeless Bulgarians from the other side of the Balkans, whose goods and chattels had been plundered or burnt by the Turks: old men and women; sick mothers, often dragging their little children along on their arms; all clothed in rags. It was indeed a sad sight! The only thing that saved them was their donkeys.

About a mile off Tirnova we came to a so-called *chaussée*, that is to say, a road which had had stones put upon it, but which had not been repaired for months, and was even more dangerous than the mud

road. Previously to this we had to pass through the Russita, an affluent of the Yantra, which was so deep that the water penetrated into the carriage. The Russians had not considered it necessary to build a bridge, although the little river was a sufficient obstacle, in rainy weather, to make impossible all communication with Tirnova, a place of such importance in every respect.

Just before reaching the city, the character of the country changes completely, and one finds oneself at once in the mountains, on the lowest spurs of the Balkans. The narrow road led along a high, almost perpendicular, natural wall of rock, which slopes precipitously down to the roaring Yantra. Two monasteries, built on to the foot of the rocks, like swallows' nests, looked very pretty. Tirnova itself is beautifully situated on a rocky plain, which is watered by the Yantra. When seen from a short distance, however, the city is ugly, and, like most eastern cities, a delusion. The streets were narrow, so that carriages were often unable to pass one another, and there were such deep holes in the roadway that the carriage was frequently in danger of capsizing. There were no inns, and it was only with great trouble that I succeeded in getting a dirty room in a house, for which I had to give a very high price.



The next morning I paid my first visit to the commander of the 11th Army Corps and troops lying around Tirnova, General Prince Shakhovskoi. He received me in a very haughty manner, had no idea where my regiment was posted, although it was under his command, and referred me on this point to his General Staff. There I learnt that the 33rd Elets Infantry Regiment ("General Field-Marshal Graf Wrangel") was guarding the pass of Hainkioi, 4800 feet high; also I learnt who was the commander of the regiment, and found that Lieutenant-Colonel Skugarevski, to whom I had to deliver a communication regarding me from the Grand-Duke, had for many months past continuously commanded the companies which were thrown forward about a mile in front of the main position of the regiment. As to the way to the regiment, however, no one could give me reliable information, because hitherto not one of the General Staff Officers had thought it worth the trouble to go there. They pointed out a road on the map, which, if I had taken it, would undoubtedly have led me into the hands of the Turks, as was subsequently evident.

After disposing of my official business, I discovered a restaurant which was, considering the circumstances, exceedingly well managed by a clever

Russian, and here I made the acquaintance of one of the members of the infamous Company for provisioning the Russian army. The Government had concluded a contract with the "Three Jew Company," which placed it entirely in the hands of that gang, and subsequently led to most uncomfortable transactions, in which there was a question about the trifling sum of 30,000,000 roubles, which the Company demanded from the superior military authorities, but which the latter were unwilling to pay. In the contract, the Russian Government had engaged to take all the subsistence for the army, for both men and horses, from that Company only, it paid it interest on a capital of many millions of roubles, made over to it the right of purchasing all provisions, and, in addition to the prices declared by the Company itself as having been paid, added a premium or compensation of 10 per cent.

What sums must have flowed into numerous pockets before such an astounding contract could have been signed !

Now the Company had a host of undertakers as purveyors, chiefly Jews, and of this class was the person above alluded to, a Berlin Jew of the name of L. I shall have occasion to speak more in detail of him hereafter, as an illustration of the subsistence

arrangements at that time, but I will here devote a few lines to him, because he was useful in looking after my letters for two months, and did me the favour now and then of making purchases for me during my stay in Hainkioi. When I was quite a stranger in Tirnova he met me as a fellow-countryman, and helped me in many things. That, however, is all the good that I can say of him. As will afterwards be seen, he made a considerable fortune by not over-respectable means.

We dined together, and presently were joined by a young Hussar officer, Prince Galitsin, who had heard that I was an ex-Prussian officer, and now introduced himself as a former opponent, asserting that he had served as a volunteer in a Zouave regiment during the investment of Paris. He described how he had carried his wounded regimental commander out of fire at Le Bourget, and had received the Legion of Honour for that act, which decoration, however, he could not wear, as he was in France without the permission of his own Government.

I asked him about certain details of the fight, about the village of Le Bourget itself and the surrounding villages, the name of the French commander—in short, matters which I myself knew perfectly

well—and I soon perceived that he had never been there at all, and that I had a very shameless liar to deal with.

Next he began to boast of his knowledge of languages, especially of Italian and Spanish, in which I was unable to put him to the test. Then he went on to the ancient languages, and I listened with pretended astonishment, which only increased his confidence.

"Greek," said he, "I know only fairly well, but I know Latin as well as my mother tongue."

"Really," said I, "and what authors have you read?"

"*De Bello Gallico*," he replied with effrontery.

"Who wrote that then?"

"Well, for the moment I cannot remember his confounded name."

After that I asked him about several Latin authors, none of whom he knew, and lastly, as if by chance, about Cæsar.

"No," said he; "I have never read anything of that fellow's."

I then asked him what Roman historians he had really read, whereupon he answered, without a moment's hesitation, "Principally those who deal with Russian history."

Now this was really too much for me, and I could not help laughing. It appeared also to be getting rather too warm for him, for he soon left the room. He forgot, however, owing probably to being too much absorbed in his historical reminiscences, to pay his reckoning.

It gave me the greatest trouble to find a carriage and a guide who knew the road to take me to the Hainkioi valley, for I never could find the Russian provost-marshal, and he was the only man who could help me. His deputy could give me no advice; he said I had better buy horses for myself, and shoot them when I had done with them, if I could not sell them—and similar nonsense. He distinctly refused to requisition a vehicle.

I frequently observed, later on in Bulgaria, as well as on this occasion, that when any one applied to a Russian official for a thing which could have been obtained with the utmost ease with the help of the inhabitants of the country, he would invariably excuse his refusal to do so on the ground that it would never do to oppress the Bulgarian brothers, among whom the Russians had come as friends and liberators. This consideration, however, was not the real motive, but sheer carelessness and laziness. Even the most subordinate officials were not afraid

to strike highly respectable Bulgarians, if they did not comply with their wishes. On this account the Bulgarians were already anything but well-disposed towards the Russians, and had the latter been beaten, many of the former would have fought in common with the Turks against the "liberators."

I spoke to this effect to the deputy provost-marshal above mentioned, who was a Guard officer. He attributed the Bulgarian character, and in this I agreed with him, to the oppression of the people for so many years by the Turks, and talked of that condition having existed "for 500, nay, for 5000 years"! When I modestly pointed out to him that by these additional "noughts" he encroached rather far upon the Old Testament, he would not be convinced, and as he still would not get me a carriage, I had no intention of entering into a long argument with him.

At last, after searching for him for two days, I came across the real provost-marshal, who placed at my disposal two carts drawn by buffaloes, to be accompanied by two soldiers, who had to return to Hainkioi. For this accommodation I had to pay 24 francs, which I did not consider too much. On the 14th October at 6 A.M. I left Tirnova to find my regiment.

As I was not quite certain about the road, in

spite of all the description given me by the General Staff Officers, I had engaged a guide, who accompanied me on horseback. A couch was prepared for me in one of the carts, but as it was splendid weather I went on foot. The guide struck me as being much better clothed and looking more respectable than the general run of Bulgarians. He was the man who had guided General Gurko in his first expedition over the Balkans, and upon whose head the Turks had set a considerable sum of money. This circumstance gave me the comforting assurance that he would not lead me into their hands. He took the same road that he had gone by on the occasion mentioned.

Shortly after leaving Tirnova, I again had a beautiful view of the city. The Turkish quarter was almost completely destroyed, but the Christian part was quite uninjured. I was soon in the mountains; but these spurs of the Balkans, although certainly mountains of considerable height, were very different from the real mountain-chain with which I afterwards became acquainted at Hainkiöi and Shipka. Whereas in the latter regions narrow roads, or only footpaths, led over deep-lying valleys or steep rocky declivities, the formation here was quite different. I was on a mountain-plain, of

which the gradient was often very slight. The road led almost continuously along the summits of the mountains, and, as far as the eye could reach, similar mountains, mostly unclothed by woods, were to be seen; it was not until later that I came to beech woods. We progressed but slowly with the clumsy buffaloes, whose harness was of the very simplest imaginable. They do not draw with traces, but their heads are placed between the crossbars attached on either side of the pole at its fore end, and thus they draw only with the neck. There are no traces or other tackle about the cart.

The farther we went from Tirnova, the more lonely did the country become. If the Turks had only had at their disposal an active, smart cavalry, they might have done a great deal of mischief, and, at any rate, made the neighbourhood of Tirnova very unsafe. Although the principal passes were occupied by the Russians, there were many mountain paths unobserved.

In spite of all these thoughts which occupied my mind, my stomach began to attract attention to itself. I explained this to my guide, and asked him whether we should not shortly come to a village where we might breakfast. He replied in the affirmative, and after saying a few words which I did not under-



stand to the two drivers, rode rapidly forward. The reason for this proceeding was not very clear to me, but with the help of the two soldiers I at last made out so much, that he had ridden on to order something to eat in the next village, of which he was a native. I did not quite like this, especially as after about half an hour the two Bulgarians declared that they did not know the way any farther ; fortunately, however, I was able to find out my way on the map, and we arrived safely in the village, which was called Aplakova. Here it became evident that my guide must be a person of considerable standing in the place. The peasants appeared to have been warned of my approach, for they all stood in front of their houses and greeted me respectfully ; many of the women crossed themselves. Who can tell whom they took the Russian officer to be who could not speak Russian ? Presently the guide himself appeared, and was saluted respectfully, indeed almost humbly, by all. Thus as it were within his own jurisdiction, he approached me with a certain dignity, held out his hand, and indicated that everything was ready in his house. There, in a sort of porch, I found rugs and cushions spread, on which we sat down. Presently there came many inhabitants of the village, nearly all men of fine appearance, who

saluted me with a low bow. I have already observed that the Bulgarians of the mountain regions are superior to those of the plain. They have kept themselves purer and less mixed than the latter, who have lived among the Turks ; and an oppressed people will always adopt the bad characteristics of their oppressors rather than the good.

The host sat near me on the carpet, and conversed with me as well as he could, although, of course, I could only understand very little. I opened my little trunk, in order to take out my field knife and fork, etc., and I noticed how much interested he was in its contents ; he examined everything minutely. When he saw my decorations he bowed low, and asked me to explain them ; they then went the round of all the Bulgarians present, to whom he in turn explained them.

Previous to my arrival he had had a young sucking pig killed ; this was roasted whole on a spit, then placed in a clay oven heated by fire, and this was carefully built up. While these preparations were being made, a young man, probably his son, placed a dinner tray, with plates, knives, and forks, on the carpet. An old man of venerable appearance, probably the oldest in the village, after asking my permission by a sign of the hand, joined us.

Then the sucking pig, which was excellently cooked, was dished up, and at the same time a country wine of terrible flavour was produced. A woman, no doubt the wife of my host, brought a fresh-baked loaf, broke it with her hands, and laid a piece before each of us. The host gave me the best pieces of the meat, doing so with his hands, which I must say were very cleanly washed. When he had poured out the wine, he raised his glass, crossed himself, and said, "To the health of the Emperors Alexander and William," with which I was uncommonly pleased. It has never been quite clear to me for whom he really took me, and what description of me they had given him in Tirnova. He intimated that he had heard of Bismarck, although I did not quite understand him on that point; also he believed that Prussia was now allied with Russia. He had also heard of the battle of Sedan, and he showed me by a movement of the hand how Napoleon had given up his sword to King William. As I had occasion to observe subsequently, there is a widespread belief in Russia also that Napoleon delivered his sword in person. In Tirnova I saw a picture representing the operation as being performed on this wise.

My short stay among these friendly people had

a great fascination for me, and it really was hard to tear myself away.

At dark I arrived at the village of Boinis, where, by the advice of my guide, I took up my night-quarters in a nasty hut, together with children and cats.

The next morning I continued my journey, and found the country far less practicable than the day before, indeed sometimes the only road was the course of a mountain stream. After some hours I reached the waggon-park of my regiment, which had pitched its camp about a mile beyond it.

It gave me a peculiar sensation to see the first soldiers of my corps, which belonged to an army so strange to me, and on their part they stared at the officer who wore their uniform, but whom nobody knew, and who could hardly make himself understood in their language.

First of all, in front of his tent, I met the field officer in charge of administration, Major von Budberg, who spoke only a very few words of German; I also made the acquaintance of two officers, who said something to me that I did not understand, and then I pushed on towards the headquarters of the regiment so as to report myself to the commanding officer.

After an hour and a half's journey, during which the conviction came clearly home to me that I was now entering a new and difficult phase of my career, which might be fraught with results that would shape the course of my whole life, I came in sight of long rows of earth huts, between which officers and men were moving about. I went up to a group of officers, now my regimental comrades, and saluted them, whereupon one of them, the regimental adjutant, as I afterwards learnt, requested me to follow him.

He led me to a tent standing rather apart from the others, and I heard him make the report: "Colonel, the ex-Prussian captain Graf Pfeil has just arrived and wishes to present himself before you."

At last I had reached my goal. I must now look, not backwards to my dear Prussian life, but resolutely forward.

## CHAPTER VI

### SOJOURN IN THE HAINKIÖI VALLEY OF THE BALKANS

THE Colonel, a native of the Baltic provinces, named Grohmann, received me in a kind manner. He was a well-bred man, and had had a good education. He began his service in the artillery; subsequently, on the disestablishment of the General Staff Academy, he was transferred to the General Staff, and on the outbreak of the war was appointed to the command of an infantry regiment. As previously mentioned, such interchanges from one branch of the service to another, even in the present day, are not infrequent in the Russian army. After a long talk about my service in Prussia, he said: "If you could speak Russian fluently, I would with pleasure hand over to you the command of the advanced posts, which consist of five companies, four mountain guns, and a sotnia of Cossacks; the officer at present in command, Lieutenant-Colonel Skugarevski, will probably soon

find other employment." On my replying that this command would be the greatest distinction for me, and that I might be able to manage it with the aid of an interpreter, notwithstanding my poor knowledge of the language, he said : " That I cannot risk ; in battle one has no time to spend in interpreting. No ; remain quietly here, make yourself acquainted with the service in the company of the senior captain ; do your best to master it, and then we will see what can be done. Come and see me often."

The officers, who were awaiting my return from the Colonel's tent with some curiosity, received me in a friendly way ; each one gave me his hand, and several mentioned their names, which, of course, I did not understand. We made ourselves intelligible principally by signs, somewhat after the manner of the deaf and dumb, for I had forgotten the greater part of the very little Russian I learnt directly after I received my leave from the Prussian army.

Before I commence any further account of my experiences, I should like to say a little about the officers of my regiment at that time. On this head the reader ought not to judge from a Prussian point of view, a fault committed by so many German officers who visit Russia. Nowhere is the saying more true than with regard to Russia, " Other

countries, other customs." Circumstances which would be quite impossible in a German body of officers, because utterly out of keeping with their manner of thought, would quite accord with Russian ideas without having the injurious effect that they would have in German circles. The better regulated the condition of a country as a whole, the better regulated also must be that of the individuals in it. Every irregularity there has an influence which extends much farther than in a community which is not yet highly developed, like the Russian. Notwithstanding all the failings which may offend the eyes of us Germans, we ought not to forget that in spite of them Russia has done great things during the last two centuries. As regards the Russian line officers as a body, they do not necessarily require the same culture nor the same fundamental principles of character which distinguish the German corps of officers; for the whole nation, and therefore also the soldier, stands on a much lower level than the German.

Most of the officers had come from the military educational establishments, and but a few had been promoted from the grade of non-commissioned officer, which, however, is never done now. All the same, they had had no general education whatever



beyond their military one. There was a total absence of any knowledge of foreign languages; only a few individuals could make themselves understood with a few words in German or French, and that only about the simplest things. Apart from any knowledge of the languages, there was an utter want of interest in and understanding about other countries and conditions. In this respect I found that the most wonderful ideas were prevalent. For example, the belief was entertained by a good many that the Emperor William had sent several regiments to Plevna to assist, and that they had there been provided with Russian uniforms. In judging of forms of social intercourse and of the cultivation of the sense of honour, all German ideas must be completely put aside. All such questions must be considered in connection with the very subordinate position which the Russian line officers hold in their own country, and with the truly wretched pay and pensions which obtained at that time, and which, in fact, barely preserved them from starvation. After the war, retired officers were to be seen occupying the very lowest positions as workmen, and among the military artisans in the St. Petersburg fortress were several retired field officers. The condition of things is now somewhat better, and

the pension arrangements are so far improved that officers who are retired with pension receive a certain retiring allowance provided for out of their own means, in addition to the pension allowed by the State. There was no ambition whatever for rapid promotion ; the object each one strove for was to get a company as soon as possible, for that offered certain special advantages which every one wished to enjoy as long as he possibly could ; for example, the senior captain, L., did all he could to put off the promotion to major, which threatened him. Moreover, officers of superior culture willingly subordinated themselves and allowed the existence of greater claims than mere education. Thus I never heard any resentment expressed regarding the enormous preference given to the General Staff, or the still more injurious circumstance of the Guard officers holding a position two ranks higher than the line officers did, as was then the case. There was no comradeship, according to the German notions ; they associated with each other simply because they were thrown together, especially in time of war. In peace time no one troubled himself about any one else, and any attempt to control the social relations of any individual would have been looked upon as an infringement of his rights. Even nowadays the

officer of the Guard or General Staff looks down with benevolent condescension upon his comrade of the line.

So much for the officers of my regiment as a body ; I shall subsequently have occasion to speak of individuals among them.

Both officers and men lived in earth huts, which provided very tolerable shelter, the officers of one company usually living in the same hut. A hole 4 feet deep, and of a width corresponding to the number of occupants, was dug in the ground, and over this was set up a hut of clay and wattle, a clay oven being provided in each hut. Benches formed of thick branches of trees served as bed-places at night. The food, until disturbed times set in, was regular, ample, and good. For officers and men two pounds of meat, generally buffalo or beef, were served out daily, with sufficient cabbage to make the indispensable cabbage soup. Instead of bread, the so-called biscuit (*Zwieback*) was issued from the manufactory of the Jewish purveyor before mentioned, Herr L. of Tirnova, which did not soften until it had soaked for a long time in hot soup or tea. The meals were eaten on the company system ; in each company there was a man who prepared the officers' food in a more or less savoury manner, and

could perhaps even give a little variety to the bill of fare. The only drink was alcohol diluted with water, which, compared with the genuine and really excellent Russian *vodka*, was as copper to gold. The provisions were brought by the wretched mountain roads from Tirnova, seven German miles off. About once a week each company sent its cart there with the so-called *artelshik*, i.e. a soldier chosen by the men themselves who is entrusted with the purchase of articles of food. For a long time I sent my letters by these men, and always had them registered; in this way only one out of one hundred and thirty of my letters was lost during the course of the campaign, and that one by chance was not registered. The *artelshiks* sometimes brought to our out-of-the-way valley newspapers four or five weeks old, which, so far as the events of the war were concerned, were very zealously read. Otherwise we did not learn important news until very late, because, for some incomprehensible reason, there was no field telegraph from Tirnova to our important position.

My life in the Hainkioi valley will be best described by reproducing extracts from my letters and sketches from my carefully kept diary, in which I entered all occurrences and experiences that I was unwilling to trust to the post.

On the 17th October 1877 the entry occurs : As regards military duty, I have to-day had my first experience, and it certainly was not very agreeable. I was attached to the senior captain, by name Lisinkov, in order to learn the details of duty until, in accordance with my earnest wish, I shall be permanently posted to the most advanced outpost position, which I hope will be the case before very long. Company drill was ordered for 8 A.M., and at 7.55 I was on parade and saw the company fall in. As the captain was not there at 8 o'clock, I went to his hut and found him in bed, and it was only on my appearance that he decided to get up. Meanwhile the men were waiting. At last he was dressed, went to the company and ordered aiming practice. After a short time the junior company officer appeared, dressed in a greatcoat, without any uniform under it, without a sword, and with a cigarette in his mouth. He did not apologize in the least for being late, and did not take any part whatever in the drill ; and when the captain marched the company on a short distance, he did not accompany it. This duty, about all that was required for the whole day, lasted one hour. The men's clothing is in the most deplorable condition, and yet they have been here over three months in

the same place and could long ago have had uniforms sent. In the afternoon the Colonel paid me a visit and spoke quite freely, and in astonishingly strong language, about the state of things here. Referring to one of the battalion commanders, he said, indicating with his forefinger on his forehead, "He is a frightful o——!" Of another officer, who had been sent on leave as wounded to Bucharest, on account of a nominal injury from an explosive in the fight at Yeni-Sagra, he said: "God knows how far the story of the contusion is true; I don't know." He spoke of the Russian generals in language that is hardly translatable. He also told me that, in the ten months that he had commanded the regiment, he had already saved about 60,000 roubles, which, of course, he should expend for the benefit of the regiment, although all did not act in that way. On this subject he informed me that there are branches of the infamous "Subsistence Company" in all the larger Bulgarian towns. Commanding officers there sell duly completed receipts for provisions ostensibly purchased from the Company, especially for horse forage, and then procure their hay, corn, etc., by compulsory contribution. The Company of course also gains by this transaction, as it pays far less for the sham receipt than it

ultimately charges to the Government. It may be imagined how many millions upon millions the State loses in this way. Colonel Grohmann found fault with the presence of the Emperor at the seat of war, which acted as an impediment in every respect; owing to this the independence of the commander-in-chief was interfered with, and strong bodies of troops were withdrawn from their proper destination, of which he gave me several instances. He remarked that the distaste for the war was universal; every one, from the general to the lieutenant, was longing for the end of it and a quick return to Russia. He also said that at that time, at any rate in the Balkans, they felt decidedly inferior to the Turks.

After a few days my desire to be permanently posted to the most advanced position was fulfilled. The officer who commanded there, Lieutenant-Colonel Skugarevski of the General Staff of the Guard Corps,<sup>1</sup> was at his own request transferred to the regiment at the beginning of the war as a battalion-commander, the Guard not yet being ready for the field; he had already distinguished himself in several engagements, and so the command of the important position in the Hainkiöi pass itself was given him. The place had already attained some

<sup>1</sup> Now Chief of the General Staff of the Guard Corps.

importance from the fact that Gunko had crossed the Balkans through it in his first expedition, and it was now thought that the Turks might very possibly use it, as the direct road to Tirnova passed through it. As long as they entertained plans of attack, this was probably their intention; at any rate their numerous reconnaissances against our position pointed in this direction. Skugarevski far surpassed all the officers of the regiment in education and knowledge of the art of war, and, although he was comparatively young—thirty-three years of age, younger than all the battalion commanders and captains,—he was held in the highest esteem by the whole of the officers. He was, at any rate according to Russian ideas, very strict on duty, and exercised such an excellent influence that if a battalion remained for any considerable time under his orders in the outpost position, the tone of the officers was decidedly improved. This is a proof how easily the corps of Russian line officers could be brought to a high point of perfection by a man of strong character, who would really take trouble, and had the matter really at heart.

Skugarevski received me kindly, but was much more reserved than Colonel Grohmann; it took a longer time to become intimate with him, for which



I admit that my feeble knowledge of the Russian language was also to blame. He spoke only very incorrect French and German, and did not like expressing himself in those languages.

The day before I joined the advanced position, a slight affair had taken place, in which we had only three Cossacks wounded, but the Turks, who attacked, lost some twenty men. I asked Skugarevski's permission to make a thorough inspection of the outposts, and he very kindly offered to accompany me. We had an excessively hard ride along mountain paths, on which only Cossack horses could be used, during which we came across the scene of yesterday's fight. On the way back we frequently came to places so steep that the horses sat down on their haunches, and in this way, instead of riding, we slid down. Strange to say, we had only constructed works above on the impracticable crest which followed the course of the valley ; below, in the valley, in the very heart of the defence, on the only road which was practicable for troops in close order, especially for artillery, there were none. I drew Skugarevski's attention to this, and he quite took my view of the matter ; he did not venture, however, to construct any defensive works on his own account, but first asked Colonel

Grohnann's permission. The latter forbade the employment of any field fortifications in the following remarkable reply :—

“Roads are obstructed only when one is much weaker than the enemy.” [This, be it said parenthetically, was exactly our condition.] “The Turks unquestionably consider us much stronger than we really are. We rob them of this belief if we intrench or destroy the road by which they can attack us. Therefore no intrenching will be done.”

Lieutenant-Colonel Skugarevski had this peculiar answer translated to me by Under-officer Minin, who had joined the army as a volunteer and was proposed for an officer; he frequently acted as interpreter for me, and was most useful to me in the Hainkiöi valley. He was a well-educated man, and had been employed in the Imperial Private Chancery in St. Petersburg. It appeared to me that it was not so much patriotism that had induced him to serve in the war as a volunteer, as an unfortunate marriage with Fraulein Sokolova, the *première danseuse* of the imperial ballet. He always spoke in a very strange way of his wife; he did not keep up a correspondence with her, and it struck me that the only likeness of her that he had with him was one in the character of a very short-skirted Gretchen

in the ballet of Margarethe. Subsequently he got a divorce from her, and handed over the *rôle* of Faust to some one else.

Minin lived always with Lieutenant-Colonel Skugarevski in his hut, which gave him a strong footing as regards the officers, who did not like him. He often visited me, and I was very glad to be able to talk with an educated man ; moreover he told me a good deal about the officers and about St. Petersburg gossip, so that I became somewhat initiated into Russian affairs.

He accompanied me on my first reconnaissance, on which occasion I was able to fix the exact positions of the enemy's most advanced outposts in the valley ; for up to that time the Cossacks had brought in such confused reports on this head that nothing certain was known. Indeed, no reliance could be placed upon their reports, as they lived in constant dread of the opposing Circassians, who excited great terror through their bravery, and even more so on account of the cruelty with which they treated their prisoners.

Near our huts several expelled Bulgarians had settled themselves, who carried on all kinds of trade, and took part in fights, whenever they could do so without danger, plundering the killed and wounded ;

they were also employed as spies. One of them, with whom I afterwards had something to do, was in time of peace the captain of a band of robbers; he was an object of fear throughout the mountains, and boasted that in the course of his life he had cut the throats of 200 Turks. He said, however, that he had never robbed Bulgarians, not even the richest. Readily as I believed the former statement, his appearance caused me to doubt whether he would have made such a fine distinction in the matter of faith and kinship.

It was not long before my "swearing in" took place, on the same occasion as a thanksgiving service for a victory gained over Mukhtār Pasha in Armenia. The colours on which I was sworn stood in the middle of a square formed by the troops. Colonel Grohmann asked me whether I would take the oath of Russian nationality or only the soldier's oath, on which I at once requested to have the latter administered. Having been led to believe that I should have to become a Russian subject, I had at my own request been released from my obligations as a Prussian subject before I migrated to Russia; when, however, I found that it was not necessary, I preferred not becoming a Russian subject, which made me much more independent.

How often have I since been urged during my long residence in Russia, from all sides, and even from the highest quarter, to become a Russian subject! Even the Russian press frequently attacked me violently on this account, but I am glad to say that I continued firm. The priest administered the oath to me, and I repeated it after him, without understanding a single word, and at the conclusion he handed me the Bible to kiss. For all this trouble I sent him a gold piece, at the advice of the officers. My apprehension that he would not accept it, and would return it me, was quite unfounded. I was much surprised at the time—although I frequently observed it afterwards—that the priest occupied a very subordinate position, and he led anything but a spiritual life; he was always the first at eating and drinking. It was his custom to plait his long hair on the eve of a religious service, and he often selected the hour of common mid-day meal for this purpose, which was not exactly pleasant for the spectators.

In the advanced position there was practically no military duty at all, and the men wandered about idly the whole day long, unless they happened to be on outpost duty; and yet they might well have been employed in making communications with our

main position, and in similar ways. Nothing whatever was done in this direction. Now and then some drill was ordered for me, and thus I learnt the Russian words of command and military expressions pretty quickly, and not long after my arrival I had to take over the temporary command of a company.

*My first endeavour was to learn the all-important Russian as soon as possible, and as one can always find an opportunity of doing what one determines to do, such was presented to me in the person of our battalion surgeon, a Jew, named Moshorovski, who spoke a little German, and was very willing to improve his knowledge. When circumstances permitted, he came to me and gave me Russian lessons, and I taught him German; and we both made excellent progress. I still have a very pleasant recollection of this instruction, so immediately in the presence of the enemy. The Doctor was really a very endurable person in other respects, but he had a habit of filling up all the pauses in our conversation with whistling or singing, which affected my nerves. The whole of his music, however, seemed to be restricted to "Trovatore" and "Blue-Beard," and so did not offer any great variety, all that he did in that*

way being to whistle now and then out of tune. I often tried to induce another train of musical ideas by asking him the harmless question, "Of course you know such and such operas?" but he remained faithful to those two works of Verdi and Offenbach. While speaking of the Doctor, I must just mention an amusing incident in connection with him. One day, while we were having our mutual instruction, Lieutenant-Colonel Skugarevski sent to tell me that a Bulgarian had a donkey to sell cheap; for I was looking out for one in case of having to move on with my baggage. The Doctor and I at once went, and we found that it was a very serviceable donkey, and at the remarkably low price of 3 roubles. All the officers advised me to buy, especially the Doctor, who kept on saying in his broken German: "You buy donkey! You buy! Donkey just like mine; we put them together!" I bought the gray beast; the smirking Bulgarian pocketed the money, and disappeared in the forest. We were still talking about the excellent bargain, when the Doctor's soldier servant rushed up to him in breathless haste and called out: "Your honour, our donkey's gone!" The Doctor, who was very fond of his beast, runs at once to the stable,

finds that his batman's assertion is correct, and is inconsolable. Then a bright thought occurs to him! He goes to my donkey, and there his man recognises with emotion the object of his care, which he believed to be lost; other witnesses also recognised him. It was certainly a fine joke, but what was to be done? The Bulgarian was, of course, long ago beyond the mountains; I had bought the donkey, and that, too, at the special recommendation of the Doctor. The animal, however, belonged to the latter. It was a regular legal prize question. Ultimately we settled the matter by my getting back the 3 roubles and his taking back the donkey. The only one who made a good thing out of it was the Bulgarian.

A short time after I joined the outposts the first fight, albeit a very unimportant one, took place. I was sitting in my earth hut writing letters, when my acting batman rushed in with a face as white as chalk, and in a trembling voice went on calling out, "There they are! There they are!" On my asking him what he meant, he added, "Oh, those fellows are there that we are fighting against; lots of them! lots of them!" At the same moment Under-officer Minin entered and informed me that the approach of the Turks in



great force was reported by the advanced posts of the Cossacks, and that both these and the infantry outposts were already driven in. There was great excitement in our camp, especially among the Bulgarian settlers, but the assembly of the troops went on quietly; the Cossacks pushed forward and the field-guns were got into position. I soon got into uniform, carried about me all that was absolutely necessary, and packed as many of my things together as I could; in doing which I greatly missed my own servant, whom I had sent to Tirnova on horseback. I read the text for the day in the Moravian Brethren's Manual, which I always carried with me, and I must confess to my shame that the words "I will restore thee and heal thy wounds" were not excessively consoling.

About 10 o'clock the company to which I was attached advanced under the command of the captain, with orders if possible to retake the positions we had lost. In front the small-arm fire of the Turks firing upon our patrols rattled vigorously, but I at once came to the conclusion that it could not be a real attack; otherwise the Turks would have been much farther advanced, and the fire was too feeble for that. The captain,

who was known to be an exceptionally bold officer, was much excited, no doubt owing to the surprise of the attack ; I was therefore very pleased when he joined a detachment which pushed on up the slope, and handed over to me the command in the valley, with Minin as interpreter. I at once sent on the Cossack officer who was under my orders to learn some particulars, but it was not until I had repeated my order, and in a very emphatic manner, that I could get him and his detachment to move off even at the trot. As the Cossacks were soon engaged in the fight, I followed up with the company. Only a few Circassians opposed us, and these shot badly, so that we had only a few unimportant losses ; they soon retired, carrying their dead and wounded with them, on which we pushed on, re-occupied the lost positions, and disposed ourselves for defence. On this occasion I had a misunderstanding with a staff<sup>1</sup> captain, fifty-four years of age, of whom I shall speak again. In several instances he would not carry out my orders, until at last I had him warned, of course through the interpreter, that I would call him to account for disobedience before the enemy. It was very distasteful to me.

<sup>1</sup> 2nd Captain.—TRANSLATOR.

thus in the earliest days of my service to take the strong measures that I really ought to have done with a subordinate who was so much older than myself.

Similar surprises by the Turks frequently occurred, and I need not say anything further about them. Anyhow the duty in the advanced position was an excellent school for petty warfare. It was characteristic that in all such cases the advanced Cossacks vied with each other in retiring before the Circassians, and always caused a commotion in the camp by their exaggerated reports.

The affair above mentioned was followed by a tragic afterpiece in the form of an exhibition of Turkish cruelty. The Circassians scouted the next morning close up to our posts. There, as I was told, they saw a young Bulgarian woman, whom they seized and cut off her head and breasts. A Circassian then stuck her head on a long stick, galloped up to our posts waving it in the air, threw it down and raced back again, unfortunately unhurt by the shots that followed him. In the head and body, which were afterwards found, a young Bulgarian recognised his wife, the mother of his children.

I daily came into closer contact with the officers, who, however, always treated me more as a guest

than as a comrade on an equal footing, and they observed the same formalities with me as with Lieutenant-Colonel Skugarevski. They often showed me little attentions in their way, such as directing the men in building and fitting up my mud hut, giving my servant all sorts of good advice, and so on. Of course I did all in my power to make myself agreeable to them, and in this respect it was most difficult to see things from their point of view, so entirely new as it was to me, for by the slightest neglect of some usage or other I might so easily have given rise to a suspicion of pride, which in reality was so very far from me. Two Cossack officers frequently visited me, one of whom, named J., was already a grandfather. Like most of the Cossack officers, he was very good-natured, but quite uncultivated, and he was always pouring out his troubles to me regarding his bad digestion, which I could quite account for when I saw the number of liquor bottles in his hut. I gave him some harmless drug out of my field medicine chest, but forbade him to drink any schnapps, the frightful effects of which in presence of the medicine I duly described to him. For three days he observed the restriction, then he broke the medicine bottle on a stone and was soon blind drunk.

The old staff captain before mentioned was also

a toper. It was on account of the vice of drunkenness that he was deprived of his company and received no further promotion, so that with his fifty-four years he was still doing the duty of a company officer. His sad habit was plainly written on his face, especially in his red bleared eyes, which only became lustrous under the influence of plenty of alcohol. By preference he dined off raw onions, when the water always ran from the corners of his mouth. One day, when I had forgotten my cigarette-holder, he offered me his own, which he took fresh out of his mouth. As I did not want to be unpolite, I prevailed on myself and accepted it.

Unfortunately, comparatively high play was indulged in by the officers. Lieutenant-Colonel Skugarevski opposed it strongly, and even punished now and then those who took part in it, but he received no support whatever from the senior officers. In order not to be surprised by Skugarevski, the players covered themselves against him with a regular chain of outposts, and the men of course knew well enough what was the object of this remarkable service. The tone of the junior officers with regard to their seniors was often quite incomprehensible, according to Prussian notions. Thus the officer temporarily commanding the battalion, Captain

G., invited me to dinner in his hut, but found there quite a large party engaged in gambling. While I was thus surprised to find that G. allowed play in his quarters, although he knew Skugarevski's views, my astonishment increased when I saw that he was unable to induce the gentlemen to leave off; and among them was even his adjutant! In short, G. was not able to find a seat in his own hut, with me his guest, and we were obliged to dine in another, which happened to be unoccupied.

Although the better sort of men had the preponderance among the officers, they had not the energy to repress the excrescences and to get rid of them. Thus, I have already mentioned a certain 1st Lieutenant A., who after the first fight at Yeni-Sagra went into hospital at Bucharest, giving out that he was wounded, although no one believed in his wound, and every one was indignant with him. When, however, he returned one fine day from Bucharest "cured," with eatables and stores of every possible kind of provisions, which at that time were luxuries, and when he self-complacently recounted all manner of piquant adventures with ladies in Roumanian society, which were probably concocted by him, he was received with open arms as an amiable scamp, and even given the command of a company. He gave me the

impression of being a fop, who did all he could to assume a martial appearance. When near me he constantly brought in French words in the most ludicrous manner, although he could not make himself at all understood in that language. Thus, I remember that on one occasion when a roast sucking pig was served up, he drew my attention to this rare dish with an affected wave of the hand, and the words *petit cochon*.

At the beginning of my stay with the regiment I came to the conclusion that it would be impossible to serve in it in time of peace, and I resolved to try to get transferred to the Guard, or at any rate to a better station, that is one nearer the frontier than Poltava, the headquarters of the Elefs Regiment. This, however, could only be secured by distinguished conduct before the enemy ; and this was a difficulty, as, in the present condition of affairs, engagements on a large scale were not to be looked for. I frequently begged to be allowed to undertake a reconnaissance of the enemy, but Colonel Grohmann was averse to it, as he did not wish to attract the enemy's attention towards us. Soon, however, I found a totally unexpected opportunity.

On the 9th November I was, as usual, dining in Captain G.'s hut, and there I learnt that a reconnais-

sance of the Turkish position was to be made with volunteers, the object being to obtain absolutely reliable information as to the strength of the force holding the pass, the position of their defensive works, and particularly the number of their guns. Some fifty of the men had already volunteered, and names were still coming in, but—not a single officer! The officers in the hut were expressing their opinion that it was a shame that no officer had volunteered, and the old staff captain before mentioned was particularly incensed about it, swallowing several glasses of brandy in his indignation. I at once offered myself, at the same time requesting that an interpreter might be given me, as Minin for some reason or another was prevented from going. One of the officers present, 1st Lieutenant Podpalii, expressed his willingness to go on the reconnaissance under my orders. This Podpalii had only lately arrived from Irkutsk, where he was an instructor in a war school; and owing to his having had to execute various commissions connected with the service in Siberia, he had in the course of the year travelled some 18,000 versts (about 2200 German miles), including his return journey by St. Petersburg to the seat of war. He spoke German fluently, and was otherwise better educated than all his regimental com-



rades, and throughout my stay in the Hainkiöi valley I found him a very pleasant acquaintance.

I asked Skugarevski's permission to begin the undertaking at once, and he impressed upon me that in case I was unable to satisfy myself as to the Turkish position from my own personal observations, I ought to try to capture an advanced post, but must avoid fighting.

Twenty-two men were given me, and I at once ordered them to fall in; for the distance to be traversed was probably very considerable, and I wanted to penetrate as far as possible into the mountains by daylight, so as to get as close to the enemy's position as I could. My intention was to turn the right flank of the enemy's outpost position by some forest path or other, and to make my observations from the rear of the enemy. I communicated my intention to Podpalii and the men, together with such explanations as seemed suitable.

At 3.30 P.M. we marched off. I had my great-coat carried by one of the men, and wrapped up in it were a loaf of bread and a bottle of brandy, to keep up the spirits of the men in the morning, which would probably be very cold,—and this eventually proved to be very useful. I personally carried a

revolver, telescope, writing and drawing material, matches, and a lantern with candles. I left my sword behind, considering that it would be useless, would only be a hindrance in walking, and would make a noise ; so I replaced it with a stout stick. About 5.15 P.M. we passed our extreme outpost line, and it now began to get dark. I ordered the party to march with all proper precautions to ensure security, and did my best to pick my way along the dreadful mountain paths. The feeling of the men was quite in accordance with the hazardousness of the enterprise—serious but still confident. But Lieutenant Podpalii informed me that they talked a good deal about the Circassians, upon whom we might stumble at any moment, and about the cruelty with which they treated their prisoners. The march became more and more difficult ; for on the south side, sloping towards Rumelia, the Balkans are even rougher and more broken than on the north side. The moon was shining in her first quarter, and the heavens were star-lit, so that one could see well enough not to take a false step and fall headlong into a ravine. About 7 P.M. we reached a snow-covered and high-lying meadow, where we rested. We had not observed any Turkish posts in front of us, although we were already on the level of two

hills on which we knew that there were hostile fortifications ; but we saw numerous fires on those hills, and also on our right. Suddenly I heard solemn music at no great distance, probably the evening prayer, which was being played by a large band ; and from this I concluded that we must have something like a whole regiment in front of us, as single battalions could not have such a band. My attention having been called to this matter, I ordered the men to observe very attentively where, that is from which direction and how often, they might hear the reveille in the morning ; for here I argued from my Prussian experience that the regimental band would probably play the tattoo at night, but would be asleep in the morning, and would leave the reveille to be played by the individual battalions. I sent out some scouts to see if they could find any of the enemy's posts, but they returned after an hour and a half without having effected that object ; I therefore continued the march until 9.30 P.M., when the fatigue of the men and the darkness which had meantime set in called for a halt. We bivouacked close to a forest path, of course without a fire, huddled close together, and our teeth chattering with cold. It was a frightful night. The lantern was kept burning, its light hidden by leaves, and every now and then

one or other of the men would warm his hands on its glass panes. In vain did I try to sleep, for the cold prevented it, and I listened on the least noise occurring, for we might possibly be quite close to one of the enemy's posts. About 2 A.M., after the men had fortified themselves with a mouthful of brandy, I resumed the march. Their feeling was very earnest, and when I ordered caps off for prayer they all crossed themselves. Then we began again. I was at the head with Lieutenant Podpalii, and each followed in the other's footsteps, so as to avoid the slightest noise. We could hardly help coming upon the Turks at any moment, for, as I had intended, we were already in rear of their position, which I recognised from the fact that we now saw the two hills which were crowned with works from the other side. The position and number of the fires confirmed my opinion that we had before us three, or at the outside four, battalions. We continued to creep forward, noticing the slightest noise with feverish anxiety. A night-bird croaked in a very peculiar way, and we thought it might perhaps be a preconcerted signal of the Turkish posts, who, without our observing them, might have discovered our presence; so we waited for some time, leaning close up against the face of the cliff. We had only gone a few paces forward

when we found ourselves on an open space where there had been a camp, and at the same time we saw the Turkish posts, which could be recognised by numerous little fires lying apart from one another. I decided to creep up to one of these, so that I might perhaps, if opportunity offered, take the men prisoners without making any noise. Utilizing the edge of a wood, we crept noiselessly up to the post, so that we were only a few paces from it. The sentry, who had not the slightest suspicion of the impending danger, was standing resting on his rifle and gazing into the distance. The man's thoughts were far away, probably in his distant Asiatic home. A few steps behind the sentry sat four men over a fire, their arms being a good distance off. I now had a great struggle with myself. There was no doubt that on a sign from me the Turks would have been in our hands; indeed it was probable that this could have been done without any great risk on our part. On the other hand, I reflected that a shot might easily be fired, which would make the neighbouring piquets on the alert, and so entirely frustrate the object we had in view. Lastly, the prisoners could not tell us more than I myself should be able to see if I remained in hiding until daybreak and observed everything from close at hand. And this

is what we did. Noiselessly we crept back again, just as we had approached, and we soon found a hiding-place.

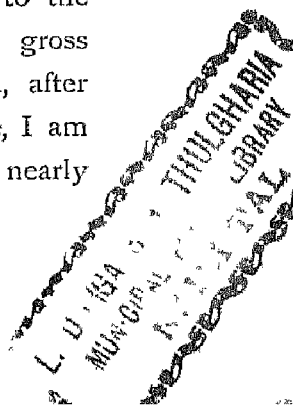
About 5 A.M., when it was still dark, I heard the reveille blown by one bugler, and immediately after in two other places, which corresponded exactly to the situation of the large fires, so that I could now consider it certain that there were three battalions; although it was possible that two battalions lay together at one of those places where there was a particularly large number of fires. There was hardly sufficient daylight before I drew an exact sketch of the enemy's position from the rear, including the strong intrenchments, which I could now see at no great distance, and I could also enter the number of guns, so that my object was fully attained. Now, however, we had to encounter a danger no less great—to return by daylight, in view of the Turks, within, at the outside, 800 to 1000 paces from whose works we were obliged to pass. At first we were covered by a little wood, but after that we had to traverse about 1000 paces on an open plain. In order to look as if we were a Turkish detachment sent out against the Russian position, I had an advanced guard, etc., thrown out to the front, made the men put their caps on inside out, so that we might not

be betrayed by the characteristic peak sticking straight out in front, and ordered the party to march at a very easy pace. We saw Turkish soldiers on the ramparts, but not a shot was fired ; and, indeed, it was impossible, after the inactivity which had hitherto prevailed, to suspect the presence of Russian troops in rear of the Turks.

The return march over the steep mountains was very trying, exhausted as we were by our previous exertions. Taking advantage of a long halt on the road, I dictated a report of the reconnaissance in German to Podpalii, and he wrote it down in Russian. As I afterwards heard, my enterprise was known to the higher staffs, and was doubtless of great service to me. About 10 A.M. we regained our camp, and were besieged by the officers, who would have us recount our adventures. Lieutenant-Colonel Skugarevski, after hearing my verbal account and reading my report, expressed his special recognition of the service I had rendered, for the object of the reconnaissance, viz. absolutely reliable information as to the enemy's position, had been fully attained. For the projected crossing of the Balkans it was contemplated at that time, as I afterwards learnt, to send a detachment of the army through the Hainkiöi pass. This plan, however, was subsequently abandoned.

Shortly after the above reconnaissance the command of the outpost company was entrusted to me for the first time, a task which afterwards frequently fell to my lot. It was always a pleasant excitement to spend twenty-four hours in such close proximity to the enemy, but in other respects the duty was not an agreeable one. The hut used by the outpost commander was never attended to, so that I always had the greatest trouble to get this Augæan stable anything like cleansed, to which end I had the table and sleeping place scalded with boiling water. In spite of this treatment I always carried away with me very unpleasant mementoes, of which the Russians, on the other hand, seemed to make very light. I generally passed the night at the men's bivouac fire, and enjoyed their conversation. From the latter it was easy to recognise their brave, simple disposition, and to perceive how grateful they were for my sympathy with their condition and way of thinking, which, as regards their own officers, was something they were not accustomed to.

About a dozen Cossacks were attached to the outpost company, and I frequently noticed gross irregularity in their vedette duties. Indeed, after my experience of them in war and in peace, I am no admirer of the Cossacks. I do not think nearly





so highly of them as of the ordinary Russian soldier, for whom I entertain great respect. In front of the regular line of sentries we had during the daytime a Cossack post consisting of a lance-corporal and three men, forming a sort of ambush,—a very favourite arrangement in Russian outposts. This Cossack post had frequently been surprised by prowling Circassians, and had always retreated in the greatest haste, leaving all sorts of equipments behind it, and caused excessive disquiet among the troops in rear. I inspected this post one day, and found the vedette taking his meal with the others, his firearm propped up against a tree. I at once ordered the culprit, and also the lance-corporal, to be relieved, and reported the circumstance to Lieutenant-Colonel Skugarevski, who delegated to the squadron commander the punishment of both the men for neglect of sentry duty in the presence of the enemy. The lance-corporal got off with a reprimand, and the man was awarded an extra turn of vedette duty!

About the beginning of November the troops in the outpost position were relieved, and only Skugarevski, the doctor, and I remained behind of the old stock. On the last night most of the officers met together in my hut at a dinner, for which I had ordered provisions specially from

Tirnova. Most of the new officers called upon me.

In the middle of November I had the pleasure of seeing my divisional commander, Prince Sviatopolk-Mirski, who had shown such kindness to me in Bucharest. He visited our position from Tirnova, and took the opportunity to express his thanks to both officers and men for the way in which they had performed their duties and borne their hardships, and his really distinguished manner evidently made a great impression. He also paid me a visit, in the course of which he expressed the highest appreciation of my reconnaissance, and offered me a place on his staff, adding that he was sure that I could not possibly feel comfortable owing to the continuance of the present state of affairs and with my present surroundings. The offer was certainly very tempting, but I reflected that I should never learn Russian properly on the staff of the Prince, with whom I always spoke French. I therefore declined it with many thanks, adding that I got on very well where I was, and thought that it would be better in every respect if I remained there yet longer. The Prince acquiesced in my view, but assured me that if I should at any time wish it I should always find a vacant place on his staff. During the Prince's visit I made the acquaintance of

a young Prince Dolgoruki, who was attached to him as an orderly officer. He had volunteered for the campaign, and instead of being attached to a regiment was posted "as orderly officer" to Prince Mirski, whom he knew, although he was utterly untrained. He dined at his table, cut a great dash at Tirnova, and kept four carriage horses, and all the officers of the staff courted his favour. I shall have occasion to speak of him further on.

At the end of November I for the first time witnessed a Russian company festival. The regiment, each company, and indeed each section, has a saint—in this case, if I mistake not, it was Saint Michael—who is honoured by a festival. The men entered heartily into the celebration of this festival, and I observed that this was the case on subsequent occasions of the same sort. On the day preceding the festival the camps of the two companies which had the Archangel Michael for their guardian saint were as far as possible cleaned and decorated, for which purpose flags and other decorations had been obtained from Tirnova, nearly every man having gladly contributed towards this object. First of all divine service was celebrated, and at its close the men took their places at the festive board.

At the head of the table stood a large bucket full of vodka, from which Skugarevski took a glassful, first drinking to the health of the Emperor and then to that of the men. All these and several other toasts were always followed by three hurrahs. The officers' table was provided with all sorts of dishes, indeed very choice ones, considering the circumstances, but even here the only drink was vodka. The priest, after blessing the table, joined the officers and demonstrated the effectual working of the blessing in his own person, for he ate and drank enough for two. The tone was at first quiet, but, owing to the continuous application of both officers and men to the vodka, it grew more and more noisy, and the general cheerfulness and enjoyment which soon prevailed were greatly enhanced by the arrival of news of the successful assault of Kars. In the evening the men indulged in games of all sorts, while some performed national dances to the sound of a tambourine. Much amusement was caused by a non-commissioned officer who had very cleverly dressed himself up as a bear, and was led round by a soldier who was dressed as a Turk. In the end the bear threw himself upon the Turk and strangled him. This had to be repeated countless times, until it became too much for the

throttled Turk. All the officers threw money to the performers, of which the bear got the lion's share. The whole festival pleased me exceedingly, but I thought it rather a risky thing in such close proximity to the enemy. A night attack might have had very unpleasant consequences, for in the long-run there were very few men in the two companies who were fit for fighting.

From the middle of November to the end of the month things were very quiet, and the Turks did not make any movement ; but this stillness was deceitful. We knew from Bulgarian spies that the Turks were actively engaged in improving the roads, both on our right at Shipka, and also on our left flank in the district between Slivno and Elena. In our position very little importance was attached to this news, but it did not strike me as being at all improbable. On the 3rd December, in writing home, I used these words : " The Turks just now are keeping very quiet ; in my opinion, however, it is only a calm before the storm, and they will before very long attempt to break through where we are posted, or on our left at Elena. I believe that they will most likely do it at the latter place, and they are said to have withdrawn many troops from Shipka. It is a bad job, however, that we always

get information so late here. Why have we no telegraph?"

Only too soon was my suspicion to be confirmed. On the 4th December our officers fancied that they could hear heavy gun-fire on our left, but such a storm was raging that nothing could be ascertained for certain. As before stated, we had no telegraphic communication either with the positions of Shipka and Elena on our left, or with Tirnova in rear. On the evening of the 4th a Cossack brought the information from Colonel Grohmann to Skugarevski that all our positions in front of Elena were lost, and soon afterwards followed the news that Elena itself had been evacuated and its garrison had taken up a position in rear, in order to prevent the enemy's advancing on Tirnova. We received the order to be ready to move off at a moment's notice. Everything that could possibly be dispensed with was loaded on the waggons, and I only retained with me my little trunk and a rug. We expected an attack of the Turks every moment, which would have the effect of preventing our reinforcing our left flank. Our situation was very serious, for if Tirnova were lost, which appeared very likely from constantly recurring and frequently exaggerated reports, we should be cut off.

During the next few days considerable excitement prevailed. The Turks, however, disturbed us only so far that they burnt down all the Bulgarian mountain villages in front of us, and the unfortunate inhabitants fled to us. At this particular time this was of course highly inconvenient, for our provisions began to run short, and nothing was to be got from Tirmova, since, with the view of preventing any increase in the indescribable confusion which already prevailed there, no carts were allowed to enter the place. To make matters worse, the weather became piercingly cold. Skugarevski therefore gave orders that our most advanced posts on the hill-tops should be withdrawn at night and only occupied by day, a state of things which the Cossacks at once took advantage of, for in one night they burnt down our little guard-houses, which we had constructed with such labour.

On the 7th December Skugarevski received a communication from Colonel Grohmann, in which he expressed the wish that another volunteer reconnaissance should be undertaken in order to ascertain whether any change had been made in the garrison of the Turkish position at Hainkiöi, and he expressly desired that it should be carried

out in exactly the same way as my former one. He said that it was desirable to have precise information on this subject, owing to the critical state of affairs on our left at Elena. On the following day Lieutenant-Colonel Skugarevski came to me and asked whether I would again take command of the volunteers. Of course I agreed to do so, although in the bitterly cold weather it was no pleasure-trip; we had 20 degrees Reaumur in the valley, so what must it be like in the mountains! Still, a man in the position in which I was must consider himself lucky to have the opportunity for doing something. This time only sixteen men had volunteered, and I could lead these without an interpreter; for, thanks to the instruction of the musical battalion - surgeon, I now felt tolerably safe in the language. We were if possible to gain the village of Hainkioi, where were two Bulgarians who were to accompany me as guides, one of them being that notorious robber - chief whom I have already mentioned. With his long musket, his huge knife, and his wild appearance, he certainly did not inspire me with much confidence; still, Skugarevski advised me to accept him as a guide on account of the good service he had frequently rendered as a



spy. It was not quite easy to make oneself understood by the two Bulgarians ; there is, however, much similarity between the two languages, somewhat the same as between Dutch and German.

As soon as we had passed our most advanced position, the rascals suddenly took an exceedingly difficult road, which certainly did not run in the direction of Hainkiöi, and they represented that the distance from that place was three times as great as it really was. On my remarking that I knew it pretty well, they gave me to understand that in time we should come across the proper road. Thus we went on farther and farther, without following any particular path, over rocks and ravines, until at last we had only one hour of daylight left. Then I became convinced that the scoundrels wanted to lead us into the hands of the Turks, and I therefore personally pointed out the direction the march must take. After conversing together in a low tone they both declared with an insolent air that they would not accompany us any farther. I reflected, however, that if they left us they might betray us, and so I felt compelled to keep these uncanny companions with me, while relying only upon my sense of locality, for not a man of my party had ever been so far to the front. I therefore ordered the two

Bulgarians to remain with me, and told off two men to keep a watch on them, giving them distinct orders to shoot them down on their making the slightest attempt to run away. Not until this threat was held out to them would they give in, and then only with very bad grace. I now decided to discover the spot where my first reconnaissance terminated, and, if necessary, to push on thence to Hainkioi. After an hour, when darkness had already set in, I reached the footpath which I already knew, and about 7 P.M. was in the old position. Nothing whatever was to be seen, as there was a thick mist on the mountains; I therefore merely directed my men to listen for the enemy's bugle calls, which had already served me so well. Before setting out I had expressed my opinion to Skugarevski that only very few troops would be in front of us, judging from the reported reinforcement of the Turkish forces at Elena. As a matter of fact we only heard a single Turkish signal in the direction of the field-works; otherwise dead silence prevailed everywhere. After putting out sentries, we bivouacked huddled close together; nevertheless it was impossible to keep warm in the cutting wind, which only made the cold more sensible. All that I could do was to prevent the men from falling asleep, for undoubtedly many of them would never have

awoke again. We therefore tried, according to my directions, to keep ourselves awake and warm by various kinds of movements. About 11 P.M. the wind carried away the mist, and it was perfectly clear. No fires were to be seen in the positions which I already knew; only in one of the works was one burning. We thus passed thirteen hours in a position which was truly terrible, owing to the intense cold, viz. from 6.30 P.M. until 7.30 A.M. About 7 A.M. I again heard a single bugle call, and from the same place as before. At 7.30 I pushed on with a few men to the spot where the post had stood which I could have surprised on the former occasion, but no enemy was to be seen; the outpost huts were empty, and the several fires had evidently been extinguished many days previously. Although I was convinced that the enemy had only left about a battalion in front of us, I was nevertheless anxious to proceed farther on the road to Hainkiöi, when we caught sight of ten or twelve Circassians in the direction of that village, with whom we should certainly have had a fight, and that was expressly forbidden. I therefore commenced the return journey, which was all the more necessary as a thick fog again came on.

If the road we came by was bad, the return route

was still worse, for the slipperiness of the steep paths made it almost impossible to walk, and we constantly stumbled. I certainly was very well pleased to have carried out the duty so thoroughly, for it was now quite certain that no Turkish attack was to be expected, at any rate for the present. This made it possible for us to send a portion of our troops as reinforcement to Elena, which indeed was at once done.

The two Bulgarian guides received a small reward, although they did not deserve it; they disappeared from our camp, however, on the same day, which quite confirmed my suspicion that they wished to betray us.

As the Turks, for some incomprehensible reason, did not utilize the advantage which they had gained at Elena and push on to Tirnova, which they could perfectly well have done, and which would have had important results, the Russians gained time to collect reinforcements, and, as mentioned above, a portion of the Hainkiöi troops was employed for this purpose. By command of Prince Mirski, Lieutenant-Colonel Skugarevski was sent with a battalion of the Elets Regiment and half a battery to the village of Drenta, where he covered our left flank and might be able to annoy the enemy in case of his having to retreat.

Every one was sorry to see Skugarevski leave a position in which he had done so much and gained the love and respect of all. To him was due not only the selection of the outpost position, but also the important fact that the enemy did not attempt any serious attack, for all the little sallies that were made with the object of feeling the way were checkmated by the watchfulness of Skugarevski's troops. A proof of this is furnished by the account of the court-martial on Suleiman Pasha. When the serious charge was preferred against him that he had not attempted to force the Hainkioi Pass and to join hands with Osman Pasha in Plevna by way of Tirnova, instead of making his useless attacks on Shipka, he defended himself on the ground that the occupation of the pass in an excellently chosen position made any such attempt appear to be quite hopeless.

Together with Lieutenant-Colonel Skugarevski we also lost Minin, the non-commissioned officer whom I have frequently mentioned, and who had been transferred as an officer to the Guard Jäger Regiment.

The senior Captain Lissinkov was now put in command of the advanced position, and I was made leader of the 2nd Rifle Company, of which I had for some time been in actual charge.

By Colonel Grohmann's orders all carriage had

been sent to the rear, so that at last we had hardly anything left. I had packed up the most important necessities of life in my small trunk, such as candles, sugar, tea, cheese, matches, and tobacco. Most of the other officers, however, had entrusted their packing to their servants, who had carefully packed all these necessary provisions in the baggage which was sent to the rear. So far as I was able I assisted them, but was soon in difficulties myself. One wanted a teaspoonful of tea, so as to be able to have a beverage which he had not tasted for days; another begged a candle, a third asked for six matches, a fourth prayed for ten lumps of sugar. Above all, we were short of meat and bread, and finally soaked biscuit, so called, became our staple article of food. After each of our sorry meals the old Captain Lissinkov used to make the joke, which was more laughed at by himself than by any one else, that there was ice to follow, only we must have it out of doors.

This uncomfortable state of affairs was put an end to by the fall of Plevna, which was hailed with joy on all sides. The Turks at once relinquished all thoughts of attacking, and the former condition of things was re-established. The expectation and hope that we should have peace were universal. No

one believed that a passage of the Balkans could be contemplated in this cold winter and deep snow. For the third time, in the frightful cold, I had to make a reconnaissance, in the course of which I succeeded in getting close up to the village of Hainkioi, and ascertained that the Turkish position was again occupied by the original garrison. On this occasion a considerable proportion of my men suffered from frost-bite, and I also lost three Cossacks who accompanied me ; they stumbled on the slippery ice and fell into a deep ravine, whence it was impossible to rescue them. Lieutenant-Colonel Skugarevski again returned, but only to take leave of Colonel Grohmann, as he had been appointed Chief of the General Staff of the 1st Guard Infantry Division. *Lieutenant Podpalii had been sent to Russia to procure clothing for the regiment, so that all my most intimate acquaintances were gone.*

As I was of opinion that no active military measures were likely to be taken, I decided to avail myself of Prince Mirski's invitation to pay him a visit in Tirnova, and at the same time to follow his advice to show myself again at headquarters, and there to consult certain persons, who had been particularly mentioned to me, regarding the possibility of my transfer to a regiment near the

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German frontier or near St. Petersburg. At that time the headquarters were at Bogot, not far from Plevna, that is about 25 German miles from our position. The ride thither, in face of the intense cold and frightful roads, was somewhat of an undertaking, but I considered that the step would be advantageous, and therefore determined to take it. Everything that was absolutely necessary I took on my horse, in the very practical Bulgarian saddle-bags; all the rest I handed over to my faithful servant Janke, and on the 22nd December I took to the road. At that time I little thought that I was leaving the Hainkioi valley and my mud hut, to which I had become so much attached, for ever. Even to-day I think with pleasure and gratitude of the time I passed there, and during which the foundation of my career in Russia was laid.



## CHAPTER VII

### FROM HAINKIÖI TO HEADQUARTERS

THE road to the main position of the regiment gave me a foretaste of what was to come. In parts it followed the course of a mountain stream, and my horse frequently crashed up to the girths into snow and ice. The poor beast was covered with a crust of ice, but held out splendidly on this as on all subsequent occasions. Under ordinary circumstances it would have taken three-quarters of an hour to get to the main position, but now I did not reach it under three hours. My feet were frozen so fast in the stirrups that I could not withdraw them from the ice until the latter had been broken with a hatchet. Still I did not feel excessively cold, as I had clothed myself warmly, and, above all, had rubbed plenty of oil on my face and over my whole body, which is well known to be an excellent precaution against cold. Colonel Grohmann granted me leave, and asked me to dinner. I then pushed on about 2

(German) miles, as far as the waggon - park of the regiment, where I had first seen the men of the regiment more than three months previously, and where they had stared in astonishment at the officer who was utterly unknown to them, and who could not speak the language. The officer in charge of the waggon - park, Major B., was good enough to give me a Cossack who was thoroughly acquainted with the road to Tirnova, and in his company I accomplished the lonely ride through the mighty Balkans, which were now clothed with their winter dress. I reached Tirnova about 4 P.M., where I alighted at the house of Herr L., and to my great Christmas joy found many letters from home which could not be forwarded to me owing to the unsettled state of things. It was, however, a lonely Christmas.

Prince Mirski had gone to the Shipka Pass to General Radetski, and did not return to Tirnova until the 25th December. He received me in an exceptionally kind manner, and gave me an account of the sad events at Elena, which had especially affected him as the commander of the troops there. Immediately after hearing this very significant description of the state of affairs at that time I entered it in my diary, and I reproduce it here ; and there is all the more reason to do so, as it quite

refutes the false accusations which were made against the Prince at the Russian headquarters at the time, and which are to this day made by persons who are ignorant of the facts, or are ill-disposed towards him.

At the beginning of our conversation I asked him how things were at the Shipka Pass, and whether the Turkish firing during the last days had done much harm. The Prince denied that the latter was the case, but he described the frightful daily losses which were caused by the cold. After that he went on of his own accord to speak of the events at Elena, which he described as follows:—  
“When I returned from Bucharest five weeks ago, being not yet recovered from my sickness, and resumed the command of my division, my first act was, of course, to inspect the positions occupied by it. That at Elena, with the advanced post 5 versts farther to the front at Marian, is a most excellent one, and would be impregnable if defended by a whole division; not so, however, if, as in this case, it were occupied by a single regiment (the Sievsk). I succeeded in at any rate getting the Orel regiment relieved from its trying duties in the Shipka Pass, and having it sent to Elena. I found that there was no telegraphic communication from this important

point, which covered the main road to Tirnova and into the interior of Bulgaria. I at once telegraphed from Tirnova to headquarters, begging that a line might quickly be laid to Elena, and I received the comforting reply that it was 'already in contemplation.' As a matter of fact it was at once laid, but when it was completed it was found that they had made an error of about 8 versts in the calculation, so that it did not reach as far as Elena, much less Marian, but stopped 8 versts short of the former place. Reinforcements for the defence of the position were denied me, and I was referred to the regiment lying in Slataritsa. On my observing that this was 20 versts off, and begging that I might at least have a line of telegraph thither, I was told that they could in any case hear the sound of artillery; and no notice was taken of my objection that this was not always true in the mountains. Such was the state of affairs when I learnt from Bulgarian spies that the Turks were concentrating troops in great numbers at Bebrova, which could only point to an attack on Elena. I need not say that I reported this circumstance, and as half of my division was in and about Elena, I decided to move my headquarters thither.

"On the 4th December General Dombrovski, who commanded the positions about Elena and Marian,

reported to me that the Turks were opening an attack. I got into the saddle and watched events at Marian. I soon came to the conclusion, judging from the unusually heavy artillery fire, that this was no ordinary attack. General Dombrovski had ordered up a battalion of the Orel Regiment from Elena in order to reinforce the two battalions of the Sievsk regiment in Marian ; and although I did not quite approve of this, as our main position was more to the rear, just in front of Elena, still I was unwilling to cause any disorder by countermanding the order already given. General Dombrovski, quite in accordance with my views, had already telegraphed to the commander of the 11th Army Corps in Tirnova for reinforcements, *i.e.* he had to send back a Cossack 8 versts to the nearest telegraph station.

"Meanwhile the attack, which was delivered by very superior forces, increased in vehemence, and the two battalions of the Sievsk regiment were compelled to retire from Marian. The battalion of the Orel regiment, which had hurried up, threw itself on the enemy with heroic valour, but was similarly obliged to yield to superior force. The retreat of these three battalions and the artillery which was attached to them to the position at Elena was carried out in perfect order, and I cannot sufficiently praise the

courage of the men. Of its two batteries the artillery lost 132 horses ; it was therefore impossible to bring all the guns along, and unfortunately eleven had to be left behind. The loss during the retreat was enormous ; the commander of the Orel Regiment was wounded, and subsequently taken prisoner at Elena. I reflected whether I ought at once to commence a retreat through Elena to our last fortified position in front of Tirnova, in attempting which there was a risk of the whole body of troops being taken prisoners, for the streets of Elena were impassable owing to their being blocked by carts and Bulgarian fugitives. My sole thought was to cover Tirnova, our chief place in Bulgaria, with its hospitals, munitions of war, baggage trains, and war treasury, and which at the same time blocked the road to Plevna, on which it was said that Osman Pasha would bring succour. I therefore determined that I would if necessary sacrifice the whole brigade in order to effect the object I had in view, and I ordered that the position in front of Elena should be defended until the streets of the city were cleared ; and I certainly expected the reinforcement from Tirnova for which I had telegraphed.

“The Turkish attacks increased in fury. The commander on the left flank reported that three

strong detachments of the enemy were advancing to attack him, and asked how he was to act. My reply was, 'Stand fast until the last man is killed.' At last a Cossack galloped up with a letter in his hand—it must surely convey the news that the longed-for reinforcements are arriving. I opened it in haste, and this is what it contained:—

“ ‘In case you should really require reinforcements, send to Slataritsa and telegraph here. The troops are warned to comply with your orders.’

“ This, you see, was to die on the spot. My troops were shedding their blood in the fight, and I received such an answer as this! It was now 11 A.M. I sent for the reinforcements, but quite recognised the fact that our position could no longer be held, as turning detachments of the Turks had already got almost nearer to Yakovitse, our last position in front of Tirnova, than we were. I therefore ordered the retreat through Elena and occupied the position at Yakovitse betimes. During the retreat the rear guard, owing to its heroic defence, which alone rendered the movement possible, was cut off, and three companies of the Orel Regiment were taken prisoners. The position at Yakovitse was defended by my brave troops with real heroism, until about 5 P.M. the darkness put a stop to the continuous

attacks of the Turks. Later on the reinforcements arrived, and—Tirnova was saved.

“Now, I ask you whether our losses, which were certainly great, were not counterbalanced by the preservation of our chief place in Bulgaria, the fall of which just before the surrender of Plevna would have made the much-desired junction of Osman and Suleiman Pasha practicable. The consequences of this could not possibly be stated.

“Now, what followed? This defeat was grist to the mill of my enemies in the Grand-Duke's headquarters. Only my most gracious Emperor saw what had really been done, and he at once sent a hundred crosses of St. George for the men.

“Two days later thirty-five battalions were present around Yakovitse, and we were superior to the Turks. I then worked out a plan by which we should have completely shut them up in their hazardous position at Elena; fifteen battalions were to make a false attack on Elena from Yakovitse; while this attack was being warded off, eighteen battalions were to fall on the enemy's flanks from Slataritsa, and two battalions, under Lieutenant-Colonel Skugarevski, were to cut off his retreat at Bebrova.

“General Dellingshausen, the commander of the 11th Army Corps, would not venture to undertake



this attack on his own responsibility, but first asked for orders at headquarters, owing to which valuable time was lost. Ultimately they gave Dellingshausen perfect freedom of action. Then we heard of the fall of Plevna, and I begged all the more urgently to be allowed to attack, as the Turks would not be so obliging as to wait for us for ever. Meanwhile, they had as usual intrenched themselves admirably ; all their batteries were connected by telegraph, and I felt ashamed that they in a few days had taken important measures for which we required months. We met together again here, in this room, Dellingshausen and other superior officers. The former asked me, 'Prince Mirski, are you still firmly of opinion that we ought to attack?' 'Certainly,' I replied. 'Then I would fix the 17th December (still four days off!) for the attack ; by that time we should have still further reinforcements.' Now, I ask you, what further reinforcements did we require, with our thirty-five battalions, when I knew exactly how inferior the Turks were in number? As a matter of fact, two days later I received two reports, the one, that the Turks were evacuating the position ; the other, that they were making a false attack in order to cover the withdrawal. On my proceeding to Yakovitse, the Turks were already out

of sight, and now they will be a trouble to us in some other place. Do you know that this mode of carrying on the war, everything, in short, that I have experienced and seen here, has made me ill? and I say openly that under these miserable circumstances I desire nothing more than a speedy peace."

Thus ended the Prince's most instructive narrative, after relating which he was evidently much moved and quite exhausted.

I afterwards dined with him and met at table his Chief of the General Staff, Colonel von Raben, two sisters of charity, one of whom was a distinguished member of St. Petersburg society, the two battery commanders who had lost their guns at Plevna, and that young Prince Dolgoruki of whom I have already spoken. He begged me to deliver a letter at headquarters on the subject of his being appointed to officer's rank. When he learnt that I was looking out for horses in order to drive there, for every one advised me not to attempt to travel on horseback while the bitterly cold weather continued, he very kindly offered me his team of three horses, with which I set out on the 26th December.

Prince Dolgoruki's coachman only spoke Hungarian, so that it was naturally very difficult to

understand each other and to make ourselves understood on the road. My first objective was the little town of Selvi, whither, I was positively assured in Tirnova, the headquarters had already been moved from Bogot. The journey offered but little variety, the chief event being that the coachman managed to upset me on the highroad. On either side of it lay fallen beasts of burden, horses, oxen, and buffaloes. If an animal was unable to proceed farther, which was generally caused by want of food, it was unyoked, and fell a victim to the cold, wild dogs, and birds of prey. I saw two particularly large carrion-kites sitting on a dead horse, and as they allowed me to approach within 20 paces of them, I took two shots at them with my revolver, but unfortunately missed them. After a six hours' drive, and in complete darkness, I arrived at Selvi.

With my very poor Russian it was difficult to find quarters, the little town being crowded with troops, and I only succeeded in doing so by a lucky accident. The whole of Skobelev's division, the 16th, lay in and around Selvi, and in addition there were several Cossack regiments. They were returning from Plevna, and after the severities of the siege looked more ragged and in sorrier plight than

my own regiment. Among the officers were men of rude and dissolute appearance. In the public room of the inn the life was such as might be seen in a private soldiers' canteen. There were groups of officers drinking and shouting; at one table high play seemed to be going on, as a mountain of gold, silver, and paper money lay in front of the banker; several brazen-faced women were plying their trade, and everything was enveloped in tobacco-smoke. They soon observed that I was a foreigner, and in a short time I was surrounded by a group of officers, some of whom understood German a little, who made me tell them about Prussia and the Balkans. Points that particularly struck them they translated to their comrades.

I was sorry to learn that the headquarters had not yet arrived, but was expected daily. However, I decided not to waste my time in such an uncomfortable place as Selvi, and so I set off the next morning in the direction of headquarters to Lovcha. On the way I had the pleasure of meeting Lieutenant-Colonel Skugarevski, who was coming from headquarters. He told me that he had spoken in my favour to several influential persons, and even hinted at my being transferred to the Guards; he said, however, that in this matter he

had met with difficulties which seemed to him to be insurmountable.

After what I had heard I was undecided whether I should continue my journey at all ; but I was unwilling to relinquish the resolution I had once made, and the carrying of which into effect had already cost me so much trouble. Moreover, Skugarevski was of opinion that it would at any rate do no harm if I showed myself again at headquarters. Of the latter he did not speak very favourably, and intimated that there was an utter absence of anything like superior direction, and that everything was more or less left to settle itself. His description, too, of the life that was led there was not very edifying. "They are not," he said, "Prussian headquarters."

In Lovcha it was even more difficult to find accommodation, and at last I had to betake myself to the Bulgarian police-superintendent, who had been mentioned to me as speaking Russian fluently. I was shown into a small, dirty room, in which a man was sitting cross-legged on the floor, patching a pair of trousers. I naturally thought that I had made a mistake, and asked, "Where is the superintendent of police?" "I am he," he replied with great dignity, and he forthwith took a thread in his

mouth in order to thread his needle. Anyhow, this tailoring superintendent did find accommodation for me. Lovcha was at this time a prominent Turkish town with numerous mosques and those open bazaars which are met with in all the larger Turkish towns. A portion of the town was destroyed, and everywhere could be seen traces of the bloody battle which was fought there a few months previously, and to which Skobelev owed the rise of his military renown in Bulgaria.

On the following day, about mid-day, I reached the headquarters in Bogot, and alighted at the same canteen tent in which I had put up when in Gorni-Studen. I found very little altered, except that the former name of the firm, "Haas and Gauthier," was erased; for old Herr Gauthier, no doubt sick of the wear and tear of the campaign, had disappeared, not, however, without having prudently taken with him the well-filled joint money-chest.

My first visit was to the Grand-Duke's aide-de-camp, Colonel Hasenkampf, to whom Skugarevski had referred me, and to whom I mentioned my wish to be transferred, as soon as the war was over, to a regiment near the German frontier or in the neighbourhood of St. Petersburg. I also expressed to

him my regret that I had not yet had an opportunity of taking part in an important engagement and of distinguishing myself. "Oh," he remarked, "we know here very well that you have already found the way to do that; we have heard all about you. Still your wish can hardly be realized yet, for I do not think that the Grand-Duke will do anything in that direction at present. But I think I may tell you plainly that if, as may be expected, you still further distinguish yourself, it will be possible to transfer you to a regiment of the sort you mention after the war is over." On my asking him if I could not have a personal interview with the Grand-Duke, he replied that this would not be of the slightest use, but he would see if he could manage it. He then went to the Grand-Duke's tent, but soon returned with the not very encouraging answer that the Grand-Duke had already known me personally in Prussia and when I reported myself in Gorni-Studen, and a further presentation was not necessary. He said that I ought not to miss the forward movement of my regiment, which might perhaps take place very soon, by unnecessarily remaining at headquarters. I naturally considered that my journey had been undertaken in vain, and should have preferred setting out at once had I not

had to deliver Prince Dolgoruki's letter to Colonel K. at the War Office. The Colonel had given me an appointment for the following morning, and as the Prince had urgently requested me to see the Colonel personally, I was compelled to wait until then ; for I felt bound to make this return for his kindness in providing me with horses and carriage.

In the canteen tent I made the acquaintance of a young officer, von Blumer, formerly in the Saxon artillery. Being the son of a Russian consul, he had entered the Russian service, and had now come to headquarters to consult. I frequently met him subsequently in St. Petersburg. He has now been many years in Persia, with other Russian officers, being engaged in instructing the army there.

I went next day to see Colonel K., an amiable, clever man, and there met the commanding officer of the Iziun Hussar regiment, a typical Hussar, with a head such as one frequently meets with in the pictures of the old Zieten Hussars in Wustrau. The high colour of his complexion made it evident that he was a good judge of Burgundy. Although he did not speak German he understood everything that we said, and frequently took part in the conversation in Russian, making a very pleasant impression on me with his blunt Hussar manner. After settling Dol-



goruki's business, Colonel K. began to talk about the present military aspect, the system of supply, the treatment of the Bulgarians, and lastly the probable continuation of the war. It evidently interested him to hear my opinion on these subjects. He frequently expressed his agreement with me, as well as his astonishment that I should have gained such a clear insight into the military situation while stationed in the distant Hainkiöi valley. The colonel of Hussars, too, was often of my opinion and signified his assent by a few pithy words delivered in his peculiarly forcible manner; especially when I remarked that too many self-interested Russians were allowed to deal officially with the Bulgarians, while on the other hand in many instances the Bulgarians were treated *far too tenderly*. The Hussar signified his concurrence in the latter opinion by an illustrative movement of his short riding-whip. Colonel K. informed me that Prince Mirski had received the golden sword of honour, set with brilliants, for his services in the passage of the Danube, and he requested me to convey it to the Prince. Of course I agreed with pleasure, although I foresaw that this valuable charge would give me a great deal of trouble on the return journey. Colonel K., who was thoroughly informed of my services in Hainkiöi, then

asked me quite abruptly whether I should not like to serve in the Guards, and I told him frankly what the object of my visit to headquarters was. He did not hide from me the difficulties attending the transfer, which could only be obtained by an officer of my rank as a reward for distinguished service in face of the enemy ; still he held out the hope that such an improvement in my career in Russia was within the bounds of possibility. He promised me that if the matter were really brought forward and, as would probably be the case, passed through his hands, he would carry it through with the heartiest goodwill. Although my transfer to the Guards was afterwards brought about in a very different and much more summary manner, I was very pleased that I was able to leave headquarters not altogether without hope.

The return journey to Tirnova was accomplished safely, although there were difficulties of all sorts to be overcome, and I arrived there on the 31st December.

What a surprise met me there !

Lieutenant-Colonel Skugarevski informed me that the passage of the Balkans would begin in a few days !

Prince Mirski had already left Tirnova, and removed his headquarters to Travna, a small town on

the northern slope of the Balkans, where the troops placed under his orders for the crossing were to assemble. My regiment was already on the march thither, and so I was never to see Hainkiöi again !

The last night of the year, so eventful as regards my career, I passed quietly and alone in my room.

What would the next year bring me ?

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE PASSAGE OF THE BALKANS

JANUARY 1878

ALTHOUGH the New Year, according to the Bulgarian mode of reckoning time, had not yet begun, the Germans in Tirnova, who were mostly connected with the infamous Supply Company before mentioned, celebrated the New Year according to European calculation. Thus my host, Herr L., returned home very early in the morning, highly satisfied with his New Year's eve, which he had passed in company with his friends. This not only resulted from the fact that the gentlemen, who mostly belonged to the tribe of Israel, had enjoyed themselves immensely in ladies' society of the lighter sort, of which there was never any lack in the larger towns at the seat of war, and had partaken freely of every possible luxury in the way of meat and drink, but Herr L. had also understood how to combine the profitable with

the agreeable ; he had, indeed, bought up the share of his partner in a biscuit factory at Timova for 80,000 francs, so that he was now the sole owner of that lucrative business, which during the course of the war brought him in hundreds of thousands. I found him in his room pleasantly engaged in counting piles of gold and bank-notes, for the bargain had been made for cash down, and Herr L. was evidently afraid that his partner would back out of it. Accordingly he laid out the money in the most tempting manner on a large table, so as to induce his partner to adhere when sober in the morning to the agreement he had made overnight when in his cups. The history of Herr L., as I had it from his own mouth, is an example of skill in getting rich by any means.

The elder brother of Herr L., a young man employed in a Berlin bank, had hastened to Servia on the outbreak of the Servo-Turkish war of 1876, and had there done a splendid business in the supply of provisions to the army. I remember that Herr L., junior, always mentioned him with the highest respect, somewhat in the way in which a young officer speaks of his colonel who has distinguished himself before the enemy. On the outbreak of the Russo-Turkish war, Herr L., junior, was in Berlin, in the modest position of assistant in a linen-draper's

shop. There, while peaceably measuring linen by the yard, he received a telegram from his brother in distant Turkey, from the little town of Sistova, which was of vital consequence to his future career: "Come here, there is business to be done." The reply was, "Am ready to come immediately, but have no money for journey," and in return he received a telegraphic reference from his brother to a Berlin bank. A few days later saw him already hard at work in Sistova. Hardly had he got together a few thousand francs, however, before he hurried off to the former capital of old Bulgaria, Tirnova, which was just occupied by the Russians, and had every appearance of becoming a central point for the supply of the army. There Herr L. at once established a so-called biscuit factory in an empty mill. I say *so-called* because I have never been able to understand why the productions of that factory were called "biscuits" in the Russian army. If you were to take a loaf of Prussian ammunition bread, let it become quite stale, and then break it up into little bits, you would have exactly the same "biscuit" that we so long enjoyed in the Balkans from L.'s factory, with the sole difference that when we received it it was generally somewhat mouldy. It was only by soaking it for a very long time in cabbage soup or tea that it was at all eatable.

With this factory, the direction of which L. reserved to himself, although he had at first half a dozen fortune-hunters like himself as partners, he did a roaring trade, and amassed enormous sums of money. But that factory nearly brought him to the gallows. In the St. Petersburg *Novoye Vremya* there suddenly appeared a long article which was devoted entirely to Herr L., and indeed mentioned his name in full. It was there stated that he had engaged certain Cossacks in an illegal manner as an escort ; that with these he used to ride through the villages in the district of Tirnova, and there requisitioned large supplies of grain from the Bulgarian peasants, for which he himself fixed the price, which was naturally as low as possible. As Herr L. wore a waterproof cloak and a white-covered cap on these little expeditions exactly like those worn by the Russian officers, and replied to any refusal on the part of the peasants by raising his "nagaika" (Cossack whip), and pointing with his hand to the fierce Cossacks who were looking on, his requisitions for grain were always most successful ; and one may therefore suppose that the flour required for his biscuit factory could not have cost him very much. Such was the description given in the *Novoye Vremya* of Herr L.'s proceedings in Tirnova, and the serious part of it, so

far as he was concerned, was that it was literally true. It was said that a military court would be assembled, the preliminary investigations of which had already begun, when all at once witnesses sprang up on all sides, among whom was a Cossack officer, who was ready to swear that Herr L. procured the grain in a perfectly legitimate manner, without any compulsion whatever, and paid the highest price for it. As important military events occurred just at that time, people had something else to do than to trouble themselves about the charges of the *Novéye Vremya* or the Bulgarian peasants, and the matter fell to the ground. Herr L. even retained his two Cossacks, as I was able to satisfy myself by my own observations. No doubt they were accounted for in their regiment as "missing."

Herr L. subsequently made no small gain by buying up all the little stock of linen that was to be found in Tirnova shortly before the bloody battle at Elena, and when bandages became scarce, selling it at an enormous profit, and after a protracted haggle, to the hospital department; not, however, in time to prevent a vast number of wounded perishing for want of bandages. After this I saw Herr L. again in Constantinople, where he carried on business, only in the wholesale way, in connection with



the Supply Company. He had a magnificently furnished house, in which a gay French-woman played the part of lady of the house, and was considered to be a millionaire. What became of him subsequently I do not know; no doubt he settled somewhere or other as a banker, and the quondam draper's assistant is now as rich as Cræsus, or perhaps a bankrupt.

As I heard in Tirnova, the passage of the Balkans was decided upon. Owing to the storming of Plevna, large masses of troops were set free, and, what was of greater importance, the Russian headquarters, which, owing to the ignominious defeats at Plevna, the failure at the Lom, and the conspicuous success of the Turks at Elena, had lost all power of decision, had now pulled itself together and determined to proceed with vigour. With the changeableness peculiar to the Russian character, which is despondent to-day and exultant to-morrow, after the events of Plevna they looked down with contempt on the adversary of whom they stood in mortal fear only a few days previously. The plan for crossing the Balkans was worked out in a corresponding spirit, and this time the Russians were right in reckoning upon the errors which might be expected to be committed and on the dejection of the foe. It

cannot be denied that the passage of the Balkans was boldly conceived, and, in spite of faulty execution, as we shall afterwards see, was favoured by unheard-of good fortune. The plan, so far as the Shipka Pass was concerned, was briefly as follows. On the 9th of January, at early dawn, General Radetski was to attack the troops in the Shipka Pass itself, and to draw upon himself as large a proportion as possible of the Turkish forces, which were below the pass in the plain between the village of Shipka and Kazanlik, the so-called "Rose Valley." Prince Mirski, with a detachment about one and a half Army Corps strong, was to turn the pass on the east, and General Skobelev, with a somewhat similar force, was to turn it by the west, and they were to attack the enemy on the day named at 10 A.M.

It may be said that it was almost a miracle that the plan did not fail. In the first place, it was highly improbable that the two turning forces, marching along the mountain paths ankle-deep in snow, would meet on the same day and at the same hour; more especially as there was not the slightest attempt at keeping up communication between the two forces, and indeed there was hardly any communication with the main body led by Radetski, the commander-in-chief. As a matter of fact, the two turning de-

tachments did not attack the same day, owing, however, to other causes, as we shall see subsequently. Further, it could not possibly be reckoned upon that the double passage could be concealed from the Turks, and Vessel Pasha, the Turkish commander at Shipka, had it completely in his power to prevent each detachment from breaking through the narrow defiles of the Balkans and to destroy them even to the last man. It is fortunate that men, however accustomed they may be to war, when they have to face extensive and decisive operations, do not see the whole of the danger involved ; if it were not so I doubt whether they would act with the same decision. As for myself, I freely confess that when I heard in Tirnova of the decision to cross the Balkans, I imagined that it would be far easier than it was, and hailed the news with joy. The only drawback was that I could not say good-bye to my mud hut in the Hainkiöi Pass, of which I had grown so fond. It was not until I was made acquainted with all the details of the plan, through the kindness of Prince Mirski, that I thoroughly understood it, and was convinced of the great danger it involved ; indeed, I may boldly say more aware of it than Prince Mirski and his General Staff officers, intoxicated as they were with success. But the days now at hand

were to decide the whole course of my career in Russia; all that subsequently fell to my lot, my honourable position in St. Petersburg and the consequences that flowed from it, is to be traced back to those winter days in the Balkans. Even to-day, fifteen years after those events, my heart throbs when I think of the blood-stained fields of ice and snow at Shipka. Had not God enabled me at that time to have a thorough insight into affairs, and (I may say it without presumption) to act with decision and success, what a different turn my life would have taken! But this is not the place in which to enlarge further upon this aspect of my life.

With the object of arriving in good time at Travna, a small town on the northern slope of the Balkans, and which was the point of assembly of Prince Mirski's force, I set out from Tirnova early on the 3rd January 1878, and began my lonely ride through Bulgaria. I had become so accustomed of late to these solitary rides or drives, that I positively liked them; for nowhere could I collect my thoughts better than when I journeyed through the country on the back of my clever horse. On this occasion, as subsequently throughout the passage of the Balkans, I was always plentifully provided with every requisite, so that I never wanted for anything,

and, indeed, was often enough able to assist others. Behind me, on my horse, I carried my Bulgarian travelling bag and a waterproof cloak in a special arrangement that I had invented. On my small horse, which always followed me in marching with troops, led by my servant, a small portmanteau was placed on a Bulgarian pack-saddle, as well as a fur coat, blanket, and other baggage; the portmanteau I still use on my travels with special partiality. In the travelling bag was to be found everything imaginable, such as linen and provisions, tea, sugar, preserved sausage, salt, matches, tobacco, writing materials, my diary, lantern, candles, etc.

Although the road was bad, owing to its very slippery state, I travelled fairly quickly, and after four and a half hours found myself in Travna, which was overcrowded with troops. The streets, which in any case were narrow, were blocked with carriages of all sorts; soldiers, of whom many were drunk, sauntered through the streets or dealt with the inhabitants. In the midst of all this confusion it was not easy to find my way; at last, however, I discovered the quarters of Major von Budberg, who found me accommodation in the shape of a small room in the house of a pretty young Bulgarian woman, the mother of three children. We could so

far understand one another that I told her of my children and she presented hers before me. I quite won her heart by playing with them, and she did me the great favour (which it really was under the circumstances) of washing my linen, and, considering the intense cold, this was no easy task for her. Anyhow, I had another proof, as on many a previous occasion, that the most trivial act of kindness is often richly repaid.

I soon found Colonel Grohmann, to whom I reported my return, and should have liked to speak to Prince Mirski, but he was so busy that he could not receive any one. When, however, I visited Colonel Grohmann again in the evening, for he had asked me to tea, I learnt, to my great joy, that Prince Mirski had been to see him in order to get his consent that I should join his staff. Colonel Grohmann's reply, as he himself told me, was that in the interests of the regiment he would certainly have liked to have me as a company leader in the hard days that were to be expected; as, however, the Prince wished it, and he himself thought it would be much better for me, he must give his consent. On the same day the following order, so important as regards my entire future, was published in the Prince's command: "Captain Graf Pfeil of the Elefs Infantry

Regiment, No. 33, is attached to my staff for the passage of the Balkans and subsequent operations."

The opportunity was now given me to do something for my future ; it remained for me to make the most of it.

At 6 A.M. on the 5th January we marched from Travna. Of course it was perfectly dark, the roads were bad, and we were soon in the midst of the mountains, on a narrow path by which the Turks at any rate would hardly expect that a crossing would be attempted. At the start I accompanied my regiment. In order to clear away the enormous quantity of snow that lay before us, 1500 Bulgarians had been working since nightfall, so that they had a good start at first ; soon, however, we overtook them, and then we could only progress slowly, step by step. It was necessary to proceed with extreme caution, for steep precipices were frequently hidden treacherously by the snow. Several men fell, victims of their own carelessness, and, of course, any attempt at rescue could not be thought of under the circumstances. We may, however, assume that they would be stunned by the fall, and would not recover consciousness before they were frozen to death. About noon we made our first and only halt on this difficult march, and spent two hours on

an open spot, where the men cooked part of their rations. While here we heard a very heavy cannonade on our right, in the direction of Shipka ; old Radetski was at work on the Turkish position, where, as we afterwards learnt, the Turkish artillery showed itself to be far superior. Prince Mirski soon arrived with his staff, of which I was henceforth a member, and greeted me most heartily. Notwithstanding all my pleasure, it was hard to tear myself away from the ranks of the regiment to which I was attached by important, if only recent, reminiscences, and in which I had gained the goodwill of many officers. I introduced myself to the officers of the staff, viz. Colonel von Raben, Chief of the General Staff ; Colonel Sobelev, of the General Staff, who had been attached to the Prince from headquarters, and was afterwards well known on account of his hostile attitude towards Prince Alexander of Bulgaria when he became his Minister of the Interior ; besides these there were an aide-de-camp, 1st Lieutenant Engelhart, who some years afterwards came to a sad end owing to malversation of public moneys entrusted to him, and a number of gallopers of all arms. While at this point of assembly Prince Mirski decided to leave all his field-guns behind, on the ground that they could



only follow the troops with difficulty, and would delay their march. I suggested to Colonel von Raben that it might perhaps be advisable at any rate to try whether the artillery could not follow in rear of the whole force, with the moderate escort which in any case would remain behind with it; he did not, however, share my views. As was subsequently seen, the artillery would in this case have come up in time at least for the second day's battle, whereas, as it was, we had to fight with eight miserable mountain guns, to which on the first day the Turks opposed forty-five guns. At any rate this circumstance taught me a lesson always in future to address myself direct to the Prince on all questions; and, as I shall hereafter show, I did this in no sparing manner. I must, however, gratefully admit that the two General Staff officers never took amiss the special confidence which the Prince reposed in me thereafter; at any rate they took no notice of it, and were uniformly friendly during the whole time we were together.

As I have already said, the march proceeded very slowly. Prince Mirski marched at the head of the force, almost always on foot, and his "Forward! forward!" which one heard every moment, was always passed on along the whole

column, which was several versts long. As long as I could, I remained on horseback ; but at last, after falling twice and on the road becoming worse than ever, I decided also to march on foot.

As regards my personal discomfort, it was terribly augmented by the fact that I had an inflammation of the throat, which was evidently getting worse and worse as evening approached. In view of the forthcoming operations I could not entertain the thought of reporting myself sick, and although I gargled my throat with a mixture which I prepared from my field medicine chest, I noticed that I became worse every quarter of an hour. I prayed to God to preserve me this time from diphtheria, which I had had to do with as far back as 1869 ; for, apart from the bad impression it would have made if I were now to report myself sick, I should have been in the sorriest plight, for of course hospitals could not follow us. On this occasion I learnt how a man can conquer himself when it must be. Under ordinary circumstances I should have gone to bed, sent for a doctor, and very properly have declared myself seriously ill. All this, however, was quite out of the question.

Darkness came on very suddenly about 6.30 P.M., when we had been on the march more than twelve hours, and we were still on the road. The troops were to have bivouacked on reaching the southern slope of the mountains, and a small village, shown on the map as Seltsis, was indicated for the Prince's staff. At last, about 9 P.M., we arrived at an open spot which had been selected for the bivouac, where the vanguard formed up in the deep snow in pitch darkness, and the rest of the troops followed by degrees. It is quite impossible to give even an approximate description of the disorder which now prevailed. In the biting cold, which was augmented by a wind that bore along with it small particles like needles of ice, the men had to find their way, wading more than knee-deep in the snow. There was of course no possibility of lighting fires or making any kind of shelters, and cooking was out of the question; but, often as I went through the ranks of the brave fellows, I never heard a single word of discontent; only the officers abused everybody roundly and did not trouble themselves in the least about their men. Prince Mirski stood there perplexed waiting for news regarding his own accommodation. All the officers and nearly all

the men of his staff had been sent out or had disappeared somewhere or other in the darkness, and only I, with a few Cossacks, remained with him. Then came the news that the "village" of Seltsis consisted of three half-burnt huts, and the road thither was as good as impracticable at night. When I saw how Prince Mirski, who was no longer young, and had only recently recovered from sickness, bore the hardships of the march, I was really ashamed of my own secret discontent. But now, in the icy cold and deep snow, when he heard the news that he could get no accommodation, his self-control completely broke down. He was quite beside himself when he saw that not one of his staff was near him, they having prudently attached themselves betimes to the Bulgarians who were working away in front of us, and no doubt they were now more or less comfortably housed; he complained loudly that the troops had to suffer so much, and declared that he would just throw himself upon the snow and let everything take its chance. In presence of this freedom from constraint, my energies were again fully kindled, and I said to myself that the Prince must surely wish to have some one near him who can act independently. I at once took everything that

was necessary out of my travelling bag, such as lantern, matches, paper, ink, pen, even blotting paper, and requested the Prince to write the necessary reports to Radetski and the orders for the troops, the purport of which I discussed with him. As, however, he made up his mind to this very slowly, and I might almost say unwillingly, I repeated that it was necessary to put forth every energy at this crisis, and I did this in a tone that was almost commanding, so that, not being at all accustomed to anything of the sort, he looked at me in blank astonishment. A Cossack now had at once to travel over the greater part of the road we had just come by in order to find Shipka and old Radetski as fast and as best he could. He managed to find his way all right in the night, so that, with the help of other Cossacks, the report at last reached Radetski after twenty hours. Having settled this, I represented to the Prince that at his age, and in face of his still uncured illness, it was simply impossible for him to remain in the open. He contradicted me, and was even annoyed, but this was quite immaterial to me. I got hold of the Cossack who knew the way to Seltsis; I made him ride in front, and followed him with my lantern at my back, fastened to the belt

of my greatcoat, so that it cast a light on the road behind me ; two Cossacks supported the Prince, who never ceased to grumble, under the arms, and so we started on our journey. The road was certainly frightful ; it led steeply down a mountain-side and was covered with ice. We fell down constantly, one after the other, but the prospect of perhaps getting into a warm room made the Prince happier by degrees, and he continued to thank me heart and soul. He kept assuring me that he would certainly find his valet in Seltsis, and he would have cold meat and some excellent Madeira with him ; the other officers, who had left him in the lurch, deserved nothing, but we two would have a good time together. It may appear strange to the reader that the Prince should have expressed his gratitude to me in this way, but our situation must be taken into account ; anyhow he promised me the best that he believed he had at his command at the time. But more, on that horrible road, on an icy-cold snowy night, in the wildest part of the Balkan range, there was laid the foundation of a marvellous understanding between superior and subordinate. When the Prince, now become "Ataman" of the Cossacks, visited me subsequently in St. Petersburg, he always

asked to see that lantern which, as he so kindly but exaggeratingly put it, had saved his life. That little, insignificant-looking lantern, which I preserve to this day as a valuable memento, rendered me the most important services throughout the whole campaign.

The road became steeper and steeper, and, in spite of the bitter cold, the perspiration simply streamed from me. For an hour we marched on, step for step, and at last arrived at one of those peasant huts, where we found the officers of the staff with rather confused faces enjoying themselves at the warm fireplace. The indescribably delightful feeling at finding himself in a warm room after the frightful journey somewhat mollified the Prince's sentiments towards the officers, but he did not at all hide his displeasure from them. The much-vaunted valet, with the promised cold meat and the excellent Madeira, had not yet arrived, and so, to the astonishment of the Prince, I smilingly produced bread, preserved sausage, and brandy from my travelling bag, which I had directed a Cossack to carry behind us. The Prince ever afterwards maintained that the bag was inexhaustible, and that if he had ordered me to produce champagne and oysters I should have done so. My simple provisions were done justice to on all sides with great

eagerness, but after an hour or so the Prince's baggage arrived, and then we refreshed ourselves with hot tea and the glorious things that the Prince had promised, of which, notwithstanding his previous resolutions, the selfish officers of his staff appropriated the lion's share. For the Prince a small room was found close to our common chamber, in which he made himself as comfortable as might be with a blanket and a camp bed. Colonel Grohmann also made his appearance, and I was able to furnish him with a blanket, as my horse had meanwhile arrived ; but it was 4.30 A.M. before we could get rest, owing to the continual arrival and despatch of reports. The commander of our advanced guard, Colonel Krock, came to us, but, owing to his having eaten nothing all day, and being worn out with fatigue, he fainted twice before he could eat anything, which was an unpleasant sight. For the morrow a day of rest was necessarily contemplated. I passed the night fairly well, and felt that my throat was somewhat better ; no doubt the violent perspiration during our hard walk had done it good. The next morning the Prince sent for me to have tea with him. To my astonishment I found that he had a completely furnished tea-table ; there was even cream from Travna, and also English biscuits. The whole of the Prince's



field canteen, down to the smallest piece, was of silver ; and his entire camp kit, as he afterwards told me, had cost him 10,000 roubles. While we drank tea he explained to me the whole situation and his plans in detail, frankly asked my opinion on various points, and was altogether delightfully kind.

We remained the whole of the 6th January in Seltsis, in order to give the troops time to pull themselves together after their arduous march, and to wait for the arrival of the 30th Division, which was to act as reserve. The men accommodated themselves to circumstances on the broad field of snow with that readiness which is so peculiar to the Russians, and were merry and in good spirits, the more so as the weather, notwithstanding the intense cold, was fine. The next day, while still dark, we left Seltsis *en route* for Gusova, which we knew was occupied by the enemy. Mirski wanted to concentrate his whole force in this place, which lay quite in the plain, so as to be able to commence the attack at 10 A.M. on the 8th January, according to orders. Meanwhile news was received that Sulciman Pasha had detained 10,000 men on the railway at Yeni-Sagra with the object of reinforcing the Shipka army on the road through Maglis, to the east of Kazanlik. As this Turkish corps would have been immediately

in rear of us, a regiment of the 30th Division was sent to Maglis to cover our rear. I must remark here that the strength of the Turkish troops at Maglis, owing to the (as usual) exaggerated reports of the Cossacks, was put down at too high a figure, and that the regiment had only a slight engagement on our first day of battle, in which it succeeded in keeping the enemy at a distance with a loss of one officer and twenty-two men.

Our march to Gusova was far less difficult than the crossing of the Balkans, as we had at any rate some sort of road to move on. I here had my first opportunity of observing the order of march of large bodies of Russian troops on a single road, and I was simply astounded at the disorder. Thus one side of the road was never left free for horsemen, which made the transmission of orders difficult and tardy, for one had great difficulty in forcing one's way every time. The men fell out of the ranks just as they chose, and constantly swarmed on both sides of the road. As no orders of any kind were issued as to which waggons were immediately to follow the several units, and which were to bring up the rear of the whole column, each unit took whatever carts it liked with it, and these and the led horses constantly blocked the road. I stood, watch in hand, while a

considerable portion of the troops marched past me, and calculated that at that rate it was utterly impossible to reach Gusova by daylight. While I was doing this, the Chief of the General Staff, von Raben, asked me with much astonishment what I was doing there with my watch in my hand ; but anyhow, when I told him what I was doing, he was candid enough to acknowledge that my idea pleased him. He accordingly backed up my request to Prince Mirski to order all the carriages, with the sole exception of the ammunition waggons, to be halted in an open space, so that they might then follow in rear of the whole column in regular order under the charge of a mounted officer, for which duty one of the gallopers was selected. The officers, especially those of the higher grades, who carried the most useless baggage imaginable with them, were loud in their execrations ; but Prince Mirski thanked me sincerely, as he was satisfied that the rate of march was nearly doubled by this simple precaution.

Gusova was occupied by our advanced guard after a slight action, in which we suffered little, and we also learned that the Turks had hitherto had no idea that we had crossed the Balkans. As some of the Turkish inhabitants had taken part in the action at Gusova, there was a good deal of bitterness in the

fighting, and after the end of the affair the headman of the village was shot by order of a Cossack officer. He was an old man with a long, wavy, white beard, and we saw his corpse, pierced with many bullets, lying before his own house. A deputation of Turks came to Prince Mirski to beg for his protection. The Prince sat on a stone and listened to the speech of the leading man, whose head was adorned by a green turban, a sign that he had made the pilgrimage to the grave of the Prophet. The others, men mostly with dignified countenances, stood all the time motionless with their arms crossed upon their breasts, while the Prince's interpreter, a Bulgarian—who, be it said, *en passant*, was a black-guard of the deepest dye—translated the words of the leader, and then, upon the Prince's order, assured them of his protection. The night was far from a quiet one, for large numbers of hostile Circassians hovered within rifle-shot of our position, so that the firing never ceased, and constant reports were brought in. Everything pointed to an important day on the morrow, and one had the same feeling as I remember having had on the evenings before St. Privat and Sedan. An indefinable something passes through the mind of everybody, and the importance of every minute is felt, for each one says to

himself that those hours may perchance be the last. This uneasiness could even be noticed among the sleeping soldiers, for every instant a cry was heard or one of them spoke out loud in his sleep. Frequently one of those stretchers which are only too well known to every soldier was carried past, on which a body wrapped up in a soldier's greatcoat could be seen; now and then a low moan would come from the body, but more frequently it was perfectly still. These were the dead and wounded being carried back from the outposts to a shed which had been turned into a field hospital.

*In a word, one felt the presence of the Angel of Death, who was spreading his dark wings over the plains, the snow-covered fields of which were in a few hours to be red with blood.*

It was always an agreeable change for me when the Prince called me up to consider reports which had been received, which happened tolerably often. He always called for the opinions of the two colonels and for mine, and treated me quite on the same footing as the others; with me he always talked French, for, even though I understood the Russian explanations, I was then unable to express myself in the language. Both the colonels were on this occasion, as afterwards, exceptionally friendly

with me ; it often happened that they agreed with my opinion even when it differed from their own, and they never showed themselves hurt when I spoke my mind freely out. But I was not always able to carry my own views through. For example, I proposed that various field fortification works should be executed during the night, so as at all events to secure our line of retreat. Neither the Prince nor the two colonels would, however, hear of them. Luckily we had no need of them, but when, on the evening of the first day of the battle, things looked bad, the Prince remembered my advice and regretted that he had not followed it. I shall refer to this later on.

At last even this night came to an end, and with its cold rays the winter sun announced the beginning of a day which was to be of much importance in Russian military history—that of the battle of Shipka.

## CHAPTER IX

### BATTLE OF SHIPKA

ALTHOUGH we were entirely without news of Skobelev's advance, Prince Mirski determined to carry out the attack of the Turkish position as he had been ordered, and announced this decision to the generals and colonels who had been assembled round him. All those men, who in the last months had so often looked death in the face, stood round with earnest bearing, and each was well aware of the nature of the task set before us—to attack a well-intrenched enemy with an insufficient force and supported only by eight small mountain guns. The name of the position even carried a certain amount of awe with it, for since the beginning of the war the much-contested Shipka Pass had been a bulwark both to Turks and Russians. Neither side had hitherto been able to consider itself the uncontested master of this important crossing of the Balkans, and streams of blood had already flowed on its

highest point—the St. Nicholas Hill. For the Russians the possession of the pass was a necessity, for without the Shipka it was impossible to advance on Adrianople; still it could only be held by them at the price of the heaviest sacrifices. It was no longer the enemy who caused gaps in the Russian ranks so much as the bitter cold, which made those heights absolutely uninhabitable. It was quite a common occurrence for the relief to find a sentry frozen on his post, as is so marvellously depicted in one of Vereshchagin's works; the relieving sentry took the place of the dead man in the expectation of being found there in a few hours as stark and stiff as his predecessor.

Every day the frost-bitten were carried in long files to a field hospital down below, during which movement many of the unfortunates were also hit by Turkish bullets. The Podolian Regiment, which during the winter had been brought from the interior of Russia to the Shipka Pass, and which, not knowing the nature of the place, did not understand how to protect itself against the cold, lost 900 men from frost-bite in about six weeks. But the possession of the pass had become a point of honour for the Russians, for there thousands of Russian soldiers lay buried, there cruelties which



filled the whole civilised world with horror had been carried out on Russian prisoners and wounded, and there the notorious pyramid of the skulls of beheaded Russians had been raised. The fanatical Turks, on the other hand, knew that on the Shipka they were defending the gate of Constantinople and the most precious treasures of their faith, and had determined upon the most obstinate resistance.

The fight was therefore bound to be a most embittered one.

At 8.45 the Cossacks of the advanced guard moved against the enemy, reconnoitring on all sides ; and from this moment I began to make notes on the progress of the action, which, it may be remarked, were afterwards used for the compiling of the official report. After the Cossacks came the main body of the advanced guard, under the brave Colonel Krock, and we soon heard the firing begin. At 10 o'clock the main body, with Prince Mirski at its head, moved off and followed in silence the advanced guard, which by this time had become engaged. The villages of Yanini and Haskiöi were taken by the latter with little difficulty, and the advanced Turkish troops fled, the whole field being covered with the knapsacks, cooking-pots, clothing, etc., which they had thrown away. Here also I saw the first Turkish corpses, all

with bare feet, as the Russian soldiers had pulled off their boots to replace their own worn-out foot-gear. I had to carry an order to Colonel Krock, and remained some time with him to observe the advance of his troops. We were now on a plain, and could see in the distance, about 3000 paces off, the village of Shipka, and in front of it, standing out in the snow in a long semicircle, the Turkish works, the great strength of which we could not as yet estimate. It was a great misfortune that I had such a wretched field-glass.

The firing now ceased altogether, and an almost solemn silence set in, the cause of which we could not understand. Not a single shot came from the Turks, and we almost believed that they had seen Skobelev coming from the other side, and had surrendered to him.

The advanced guard now moved forward step by step, and at the proper distance in rear of it followed the main body in order of attack, with colours flying. It was an impressive moment. Nobody knew what was going to happen, and this uncanny silence of the enemy was almost more oppressive than firing would have been. Thus we got up to 1000 paces from the advanced works, the outlines of which we could now distinctly make out without any change having

taken place in the situation. Now at last something of decisive importance must happen! Prince Mirski galloped forward with his staff.

A short distance in front of us I saw a small ditch, and rode forward to see whether we could get over it. Suddenly I heard the, to me, well-known howling shriek, and 10 paces in front of my horse a shell pitched and burst, the splinters flying over my head, and snow and earth being thrown over me, several of the splinters also striking among the staff and wounding some horses. Without doubt, the range of the ditch, the dark edges of which were visible from afar, had been taken by the Turks.

As a bandmaster starts the music by a wave of his stick, so this shell, evidently aimed at the staff, seemed to be the sign for the opening of a *feu d'enfer*. Projectiles rained in from all sides, and in front we saw the first wounded writhing in the snow. Prince Mirski said calmly, "Let us take another position"; and to me he said in French, "That was a good shot." Slowly we rode to a small hill somewhat to the left, followed by Turkish shells, and from it the Prince ordered several rifle battalions to capture a battery, which apparently mounted only three guns, but which was most inconveniently placed as regards our line of advance, as it took us in the right flank.

At the same time our little mountain guns came into action, and opened fire, but against the heavy Turkish pieces they made as little impression as small dogs do when they bark at big ones. During the course of the action, however, the little ones showed that they knew how to bite too. The riflemen went forward with great bravery, and were well led by their officers, but their losses grew terribly heavy, and the field of attack was soon covered with their dead and wounded. An example to all, Prince Mirski remained quiet and composed, like a gentleman, as he was. He sent me back to my regiment, which was at the head of the main body, to inform it that the Elets men were to have the honour of being the first to advance against the village of Shipka, which gave its famous name to the whole Turkish position. Colonel Grohmann, who was in front of his regiment, received with an earnest nod the order which I gave him in German, and then turned round to the regiment, and in a few well-chosen words communicated to it the Prince's message. Officers and men crossed themselves, and looked up determinedly to their commander.

In the meantime the fire had increased in intensity, and our staff, which was visible<sup>8</sup> from afar, seemed to be a favourite target. The horses of our interpreter

and of an orderly officer had been wounded, and two orderly Cossacks had been killed. A shell struck the horse of another orderly officer in the body, burst, and tore the lower part of the young officer's body so badly that he died in a few hours in frightful agony. In half an hour's time the welcome news arrived that the above-mentioned battery had been taken, and sixty men of its escort, all Bashi-Bazuks, made prisoners. The captured guns were at once turned against the Turks, and afforded a very acceptable support to our artillery.

I may here remark that next day, in conversation with me, Vessel Pasha's chief of the staff said that great importance was attached to this battery, as it took the Russian attack constantly in flank, and attributed its capture to the cowardice of the Bashi-Bazuks. He also said that our staff was at once recognised as that of the general commanding, and consequently was kept under fire.

At 11.30 the Prince ordered the attack upon Shipka. The Elets and Sievsk Regiments advanced boldly, but were met by a terrible fire, which increased every moment in intensity, and before which the attack began to waver. The losses were heavy, and one officer after another with whom I was acquainted was carried past us to the rear wounded.

The brigadier, General Dombrovski, a man close on sixty, received a bullet in the collar-bone, but tied up his wound himself and remained in action; Colonel Grohmann, Davidov, the regimental adjutant, and others were carried past severely wounded. On the left flank also things were not going well, for the Turks were constantly receiving reinforcements, and nothing was to be seen or heard of Skobelev; only up on the St. Nicholas Hill Radetski's attack on the Turkish position was visible, and his guns were thundering.

With concern I noticed that many wounded were accompanied by unwounded men to the rear. A bad sign this, for such apparent humanitarianism always means that courage is beginning to sink. Colonel von Raben gave a piece of very good advice, which was to collect these Samaritans and lead them back into action, which was accordingly done.

An officer now brought a report that the Elefs Regiment was beginning to give way, but immediately afterwards another galloped up and reported that the old wounded General Dombrovski had succeeded in leading them forward again, but that support was urgently required. Prince Mirski, accompanied only by me, at once galloped to the Orel Regiment, which in this war had already gained

for itself the name of one of the bravest of the Russian army, and which, in spite of its enormous losses, which had only partly been made good by drafts, always remained ready for anything. Standing up in his stirrups, he called out to them in a loud voice: "Children! more troops are required at the front! I require my Orel lads! Forward!" A loud hurrah was the answer, and soon the brave regiment was in the foremost line.

Our situation grew more and more dangerous. The Turks fought desperately, and constantly brought fresh troops into action, while we finally had only two battalions left in reserve. Nothing was to be heard of Skobelev, and the infernal noise and the smoke prevented us from observing Radetski's progress. All eyes were turned to the left, whence Skobelev was expected to appear, but all the Cossacks who were sent out on reconnaissance returned with the same tale, that they could see nothing of his troops. The hours passed slowly, and the fight did not advance; indeed, we were glad that it did not go back, and as it got later it became more certain that, God knows why, Skobelev was not coming. Our position was very dangerous, for if we were beaten we might be forced back upon Suleiman Pasha into the narrow passes of the

Balkans, and there be annihilated. Except the waggon which immediately followed the troops, and which themselves had been heavily drawn upon, there was no reserve of ammunition, and the men had only one day's rations with them. We were also unaware of what was going on behind us in the town of Kazanlik, which had been reported to us in the morning as occupied by the enemy. No doubt we had had a certain measure of success, as part of the village of Shipka was in our hands, and the telegraph line to the St. Nicholas Hill had been destroyed, a matter which afterwards turned out to have been of the greatest importance. Vessel Pasha's chief of the staff, whom I have already mentioned, had, it appears, in the belief that the line was still working, telegraphed to the commander on the St. Nicholas that the troops which could be spared from it should be sent to him to enable a counter-attack to be made upon the exhausted Russians. This message was naturally not received, and later on the darkness prevented the Turkish plans from being carried out, and they had to be postponed till the following morning. Two strong redoubts had also been captured, and were held by our people, but as the numbers of the enemy, who, now that Skobelev gave no sign, had no fear for



their right flank, continually increased, it at last became clear that even the very best troops in the world could no longer press forward, and would even have hard work to hold their ground. Over and over again the commanders of units sent back asking for supports, but Prince Mirski had none to give, and the troops had to hold on and die in their positions.

Prince Mirski now began to doubt of success; his mind reverted to the defeat he had suffered at Elena, and he remarked to me that this day would bring new shame upon his head. A sort of council of war was called, in which we three and the commander of the artillery took part, and the Prince put his views before us. As he said, he had done his duty, and attacked at the time ordered, but had been shamefully left in the lurch, and there was therefore nothing left for him but to save his army, and with this view to withdraw it to the Balkans. The artillery general, a fat, helpless personage, who the whole day had kept well out of harm's way, gave his unconditional support to this course. Colonel von Raben was for holding on in the present position, and, if it were absolutely necessary, retiring during the night to the Balkans. Colonel Sobelev was also for at first holding on in the actual position, but

only proposed to withdraw in the first instance, if necessary, to our former position at the outlet of the pass, and to fortify ourselves there, at the same time expressing his regret that the works I had proposed on the previous evening had not been carried out. As before the beginning of the council a report had been received that Kazanlik had been abandoned by the Turks, and that a large amount of supplies had been found there, his advice was to transport as much as possible of these into the said position, where, at any rate, a last attempt to hold out must be made, and the Balkans should only be recrossed under pressure of the most extreme necessity. Naturally the communications to the rear must be kept open. Asked in my turn for my opinion, I expressed myself as follows : "As Kazanlik with its rich supplies is ours, my advice is to send the pioneers off there at once, and these, with the aid of the inhabitants, should hastily fortify the town, which is well adapted for defence, so that at least it may be in a position to oppose resistance to the first attack of the enemy. We, however, should remain in our positions as long as we can hold them ; if we are driven out we can retire on Kazanlik, which will have been fortified during the night, and make a Russian Plevna of it."

All agreed with my opinion, and the pioneers were at once sent off. The fat artillery general remarked that under the circumstances it was necessary that the artillery which had been left behind in the Balkans should be brought up, and that it was so important that he himself would go to see after it. He then disappeared, and it was many days before I saw him again.

The troops were now forbidden to make any attempts to advance, and were ordered to intrench themselves as far as possible in the positions they held. Only in the case of Skobelev appearing were they at once to take part in his attack. At 4.45 P.M., when darkness had already set in, the fight was broken off, and soon also the Turkish fire ceased.

So ended the first day of the battle. Of our men 4000 lay on the battlefield, their bodies dreadful to behold, for after a bullet wound a dead body stiffens very quickly, especially in intense cold. Many appeared to have had a hard struggle with death, their fists closed, their arms high in the air, and red pools of blood on the white snow. Everything possible was done for the unfortunate wounded, but what could the few surgeons and hospital assistants do among such a mass of them? Many a one must

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have been frozen or have bled to death during that night.

Prince Mirski returned to Janina and passed the night there. And what a night! The whole place was filled with wounded, and the doctors were working might and main. Gun and rifle fire burst out at times during the night, but each time only lasted a few minutes. To my delight my servant arrived with my baggage, so that at least I could partake of tea and the already-mentioned sausage. When one has been all day in action one is naturally inclined to feel not in the best of humours with those who have been kept away in rear; but I could not help laughing when my servant, who had been many miles distant from the battlefield, and had only heard the firing, remarked with great self-satisfaction, "Yes, yes! it has been a hot day's work!"

Along with many other officers, I found a common shelter in a small room, and lay with my feet against those of the aide-de-camp of the fat artillery general, who was even more portly than his commander. The latter had been in such a hurry to go off to look after his guns, that he had not even told his aide-de-camp, whom the Prince now took on as an orderly officer. He was of the same opinion

as his general that "discretion is the better part of valour," and before he fell asleep bewailed to me his bad luck at not having accompanied him, as now to-morrow he would be certain to be killed. These mournful thoughts did not, however, rob him of sleep, for soon he was snoring with tremendous force.

## CHAPTER X

### THE SECOND DAY OF THE BATTLE

WE at headquarters were afoot early on the 9th January, and our conversation turned mostly on the question as to why Skobelev had not come. The Prince was of opinion that, in spite of his indifferent character, he was not capable of such a trick as to intentionally leave us in the lurch, and that it was more probable that he had met with insurmountable difficulties in the Turkish resistance. Reports came in from our advanced troops that no change had taken place, but one of the commanders stated that in rear of the village of Shipka, part of which, it will be remembered, was in our possession, movements of Turkish troops had been observed.

Prince Mirski ordered the two colonels, whose horses were saddled, to ride forward, while I was to follow with him in a quarter of an hour. This was towards 8.30 A.M., and it appeared to us as if the firing in front had increased slightly in intensity. I

therefore hastened to get my horse saddled, and called for my servant, but he had disappeared. I was beside myself, for not only was I in a great hurry, but I could not even tell one of the Cossack orderlies attached to the staff where my horse was, as I had on the previous evening turned it over to my servant Janke with orders to find shelter for it. I therefore wandered round in the yard and in the neighbourhood calling out, "Janke! Janke!" and the Cossacks also all yelled, "Janke! Janke!" I must confess that for the impartial spectator there must have been a good deal of the comic element in the scene, but at any rate I at the moment was not in the best of tempers, and I breathed more freely when one of the Cossacks brought up the delinquent, who had been fast asleep in a corner of the stable, probably to refresh himself after the "hot day's work" he had gone through the previous day. It was not "my kingdom" which I gave for the horse when brought, but, as I must confess to my shame, a few good reminders across my man's back with a Cossack whip. The great excitement of the day must be my excuse for this outburst, and I must say that Janke never bore malice for my hastiness, but served me faithfully to the end of the campaign, and for many a year afterwards he never missed an

opportunity of sending me messages from Warsaw, where he now lives as a basketmaker.

While I was riding forward with Prince Mirski, the Turks suddenly opened a furious fire from guns and small arms, which concealed their advanced lines in smoke, and at the same moment an orderly officer galloped up on a panting horse, calling out from a distance, "The Turks are attacking all along the line." Indeed their fanatical shouts of "Allah, Allah!" were heard above the roar of the artillery.

What was dreaded had therefore happened, and our situation was a most critical one. If our troops abandoned their advanced positions, it was to be feared that, as we had no reserves worth speaking of, and no one any longer hoped for support from Skobelev, the retreat would soon degenerate into flight, and the Turks would reach the works at Kazanlik simultaneously with our own troops.

From the Prince's face I saw what a struggle was going on in his mind. For some moments we rode silently alongside one another, our eyes fixed on the battlefield, and then suddenly he looked round at me with an angry look, such as I never before or since saw on his face, and said, "I was a fool (*j'étais stupide*) to take your advice and not



insist upon following out my own plan and withdrawing my troops. You see, I shall lose my army! As I had fulfilled my orders and attacked Shipka, and as Skobelev did not arrive, I could have withdrawn with all honour," emphasizing the last three words strongly. I answered him quite quietly, "I do not think with *all* honour." He stared at me, and was silent. These were the only words we exchanged on our ride up to the scene of action.

We ascended a hill, which lay within the zone of artillery and small-arm fire, from which we could get a good view, a squadron of Cossacks following the Prince as his personal escort. The situation looked very bad. Our exhausted troops beat back attack after attack with a heroism which I cannot sufficiently praise, and especially the Rifles under brave Colonel Krock highly distinguished themselves. But there is an end to everything, and we saw that the Turks were making progress, though only slowly at first. I was convinced that at any moment we might have to beat a full retreat.

Suddenly on our extreme left such a thundering hurrah was heard that Prince Mirski at once hurried off in that direction. He was met by Colonel Krock's aide-de-camp galloping, shouting hurrah, and waving a piece of paper in his right hand. This

he handed to the Prince. It was a piece of white paper covered with grease-spots, which probably had been used to roll meat up in, but it is now an important leaf in the history of the war, for it contained the following words, few but of immense importance : " Hurrah ! Skobelev is advancing with bands playing. Krock."

It was a moment which one must have lived through to understand. Wellington must have felt the same at Waterloo when Blücher arrived.

I shall never forget the look which Prince Mirski gave me.

At once it was remarked that the Turks stopped their advance against us and turned to meet their new opponent, and we utilized this to capture, though with some loss, the village of Shipka and most of the Turkish intrenchments. Then all became quiet, and we breathed freely and could observe Skobelev's fight with a feeling, pardonable under the circumstances, of self-satisfaction, while here and there thoughts put themselves into words, and men said, " Now these fellows on the left can have a chance of seeing what sort of a job this is."

And indeed the fight against Skobelev waxed hot, while from above, on the hills, we heard Radetski at work again, and we knew that the surrender of the

Turkish army was now only a question of hours. Towards 12.30 we saw the whole of the Turkish cavalry, about 2000 Circassians, make a dash in wild flight for the open space between Skobelev's and Mirski's troops, and take the road to Kazanlik. On my proposal, the Prince's escort squadron of Cossacks opened a quick fire at about 1000 paces on the fugitives, and caused them some loss, but we ourselves got into a pretty hot fusillade, as the Circassians fired on the move at our Cossacks, of whom several were killed and wounded. I took from one of the wounded Circassians a sword and Peabody carbine, which I have to this day. Later on, those fugitives committed the most horrible atrocities in the Turkish and Bulgarian villages.

The fight against Skobelev lasted for another hour, and the Turks courageously answered attack with attack, the Russian hurrah mingling with the desperate yell of Allah !

Soon after 2 o'clock the Turkish fire began to slacken, and shortly white flags and cloths were seen in their lines as signs of surrender. The joy of our troops was indescribable ; they embraced and kissed one another, and crossed themselves, and even the poor wounded took part in the general enthusiasm. Prince Mirski at once galloped forward and found

our people making arrangements for taking over the Turkish prisoners, who, mostly in rags and tatters, looked more like brigands than soldiers; only here and there a few old soldiers were seen, grave and dignified Orientals, looking like figures out of Doré's Bible. Not one cry of pain was audible from the masses of Turkish wounded lying all around; they bore their torments in silence, and looked forward calmly to death. The appearance of one old Turkish soldier with a long gray beard will live in my mind for ever. He sat upon a stone, his back propped up against a wall. His uniform was undone and showed his hairy chest, from which blood was slowly welling. On his knees lay the Koran, and his lips moved in prayer. As I passed he raised his eyes to me, and I could see that he was in full possession of his senses.

The redoubts, which were still partly occupied by the Turks, were of great strength and extremely skillfully constructed. On the parapet of one of them stood some hundred men of the Elets and Sievsk Regiments with their rifles at the ready and pointing downwards, and in the redoubt itself were 400 or 500 Turks, crowded together, with their rifles held at the hip and pointing upwards. One rifle going off would have led to a frightful massacre, but Prince Mirski

commanded the Russians to order arms, and through his interpreter made the Turks do the same, whereupon the latter at once surrendered.

The Prince now rode along the ranks of his jubilant troops and thanked them in a few words with emotion. When he came to the leader of our advanced guard, the brave commander of the Rifle Brigade who has been several times mentioned, Colonel Krock, he took off his cap, kissed him, and rode bare-headed along the front of the Riflemen. He was now anxious to speak with Skobelev, who, as his junior, now came under his orders, with regard to the speedy removal of the prisoners, in case of an attack on the part of Suleiman Pasha, and on numerous other important matters.

I received orders to search for the General and show him the way to the Prince. This was to me a most agreeable duty, as I was thus enabled to make the personal acquaintance of this already renowned and, by his troops, almost deified leader. On my way to him I came across the captured Turkish officers, who were all standing together and carrying on an animated conversation. One of them came up to me and addressed some words to me in Turkish, which naturally I did not understand, but still I could see from his manner

and gestures that he had something important to communicate, and so I stopped for a moment and asked if anybody understood French. Another then came up to me and in a most impertinent manner explained that they wanted to know at once what we meant to do with them, while others backed him up by such threatening gestures that my Cossack orderly grasped at his whip. I replied that they must have patience for a little, and that in good time arrangements would be made for them, but that at the moment more important matters had to be considered.

At last I found Skobelev, who was surrounded by a large number of people, among them many foreigners, principally English newspaper correspondents, and the painter Vereshchagin, afterwards so renowned for his pictures of the war. Skobelev sat on his historical white horse and appeared to be in the act of giving some orders. He was then just thirty-three years old and of a handsome appearance, reminding one rather of the Emperor Frederick in his younger years, and his face, framed in its fair whiskers and beard, beamed with joy and triumph.

I rode up to him, told him who I was and that I had been sent by Prince Mirski to request him to

come to him, at the same time excusing myself for not speaking in Russian, and telling him the reason. Skobelev held out his hand to me and said, smiling, in German, "Speak whatever language you like, German, French, or English. It's all the same to me." Then he went on in a half-earnest, half-mocking tone, "You must have rather longed for me yesterday, but I never attack till I have all my troops together. I shall explain all later on to you, but now, before I ride to Prince Mirski, I must thank my brave troops; if you like, you can accompany me."

Thus I had the good luck to take part in that ride which Vereshchagin has immortalized in one of his best pictures. Seldom have I seen such enthusiasm as Skobelev's troops showed for their leader. Caps were thrown up in the air, the hurrahs were deafening, and many men pressed round the General's horse. There were dreadful sights to be seen on Skobelev's battlefield, for his men, well knowing that their general did not like prisoners to be made during an action, plied the bayonet with good-will. Evidently it was not displeasing to him that a former Prussian officer should accompany him in his ride and be a witness of his triumph. On the way to where Prince Mirski was he tried to explain to me the reasons

for his late arrival, the principal of them being that he was convinced that Mirski would hold out for a day, and that he had to wait for a regiment which was late in coming up. As a proof of this, he said that, during this day's fighting, he had to ask Mirski for the support of a regiment, which certainly was true. Mirski, however, rightly believing that Skobelev had only made this request with a view to afterwards justifying himself by it, had flatly refused. It showed what a bad conscience Skobelev had that he took such pains to excuse himself to me, a simple captain. It is now well known, as we indeed had never for a moment doubted, that he had delayed intentionally, on mean grounds of personal interest, in the hope that Prince Mirski would be beaten, and that he, Skobelev, would on the following day wipe out the defeat and appear as the hero of the battle.

Prince Mirski had always the lowest opinion of Skobelev's character, and said that he was an officer with whom, in time of peace, no one would shake hands. His grandfather was a drummer, and, under Catherine II., I know not for what reason, became an officer ; and his father, who, like himself, was a lieutenant-general and aide-de-camp to the Emperor, had gathered together the whole of his great fortune



in Asia and in various high posts which he had held.

When he caught sight of Prince Mirski he galloped up to him, dismounted gracefully, approached him cap in hand, kissed and embraced him, and congratulated him on the victory he had won. I said afterwards to the Prince that this kiss was like that of Judas, which he laughingly said was an apt comparison. Prince Mirski treated Skobelev coolly and with dignity, said nothing whatever about his late arrival, arranged a few details with him, and handed over to him the care of the prisoners.

Hours had passed in the meantime ; twilight had come on, and the Prince returned with us to Kazanlik, where we found accommodation in the rooms of the hospital. About 800 wounded or frost-bitten Turkish soldiers lay in the town, and the Turkish doctors, most of whom spoke French, asked for and received from the Prince protection for their charges. I got one of them to prescribe medicine for my throat, which in the meantime had got worse, and this afforded me considerable relief.

As we were sitting together, in good spirits, over our simple supper, the apothecary came in and asked in very imperfect French whether any of us spoke

German. Prince Mirski pointed me out to him, and said that here was one who could speak it a little. The Turkish apothecary then disclosed himself as a good Viennese and Catholic, although he was forced to wear the fez, but he could not exactly say what he wanted, for he was so drunk that he could hardly speak a sensible sentence. He continually patted the Prince, to whom this was evidently disagreeable, so that at last the latter asked him in a friendly manner to go away, as we had important matters to talk about.

After the pause caused by this incident, Prince Mirski made a short speech, and thanked us three for the support which he had received from us, saying, amongst other things, "In the serious moments of yesterday's and to-day's fighting it was you who, by your youthful determination, kept me straight."

We sat for a long time together, talking over the great events through which we had lived in the last few hours, and Colonel von Raben drew my attention to a bullet-hole in the right sleeve of my thick winter greatcoat. The bullet had passed in and out without my noticing it in the excitement of the moment; a little closer, and my arm would have been smashed.

To my great joy I found a bearable, or at least a warm, place to lie down in, and at last I

passed once more a quiet night. On the next morning, at 6 o'clock, the Prince sent for me, and asked me to come and drink tea with him, and ride with him to meet the commander-in-chief, Radetski, whose arrival from the St. Nicholas Hill was shortly expected. Just as dawn was breaking we started across the wide battlefield to find Skobelev first. Everywhere on the white snow there were dark spots, which on closer inspection proved to be the bodies of our brave soldiers, who were sleeping their last long sleep on the spot where a bullet had reached them. What an amount of human misery was crowded into this space! How many wives and children in the vast empire of the Tsar were still unconscious that their husbands or fathers had laid down their lives far off in the snow-clad Balkans, in many cases leaving their dear ones in the most bitter poverty! One of the larger redoubts, which had been captured on the first day, showed with what bravery both sides had fought. In a circle round it lay the Russian soldiers, mostly hit in the head, and fallen forward on their faces, their outstretched hands digging into the snow, and many still retaining their grip of their rifles. Behind the parapet lay the corpses of the Turks, who had defended their redoubt bravely to the last, and in the interior the Russian

and Turkish bodies, mingled together, showed that a fierce hand-to-hand fight with the bayonet had taken place.

The Prince appeared to be deeply moved at the sight, and said that he was no longer fitted for war, and was too nervous, as he felt that yesterday and the day before he had been undecided and wavering, which usually was no part of his character. I replied to him, "It is much easier for one in my position, who has no responsibility like you, to be determined. It was very natural that thoughts should arise in your mind of saving your army by a retreat; you knew that help was coming from Skobelev, who is a man of great determination, and that something he could not overcome must have happened to prevent him from appearing. The same might have happened on the second day. You have done nothing but now and then ask for our opinion, and then determine on steps which you thought appropriate, and which, as you ordered them, contributed to yesterday's success. Every general would do the same in a similar difficult situation." He was silent for a long time, and then said, "You are quite right." Thereafter he never again broached the subject.

A peculiar incident occurred in connection with Skobelev. Prince Mirski demanded from him the

swords of the captured pashas, which he, as the senior, ought to hand over to Radetski. Skobelev at first asserted that he had not got them, as he had allowed the pashas to retain them, and Mirski thereupon sent to the pashas, who declared that they had given them up to Skobelev. It appeared at last that Skobelev really had them, and either wanted to keep them himself or to have the honour of handing them over to Radetski. He then declined to give them up, till Prince Mirski, urged on by us, plainly told him that if he did not hand over the pashas' swords, his own would have to be given up instead. Prince Mirski then delivered them over to Radetski, as was proper, but the latter in his modest way at first refused to accept them. It is characteristic of Skobelev that in comparatively trifling matters he showed himself false and untrustworthy. It was further stated that the Turkish military treasure-chest had come into his possession, and one of the higher Turkish officers assured us that it contained nine bags of gold pieces. A few days later Skobelev actually handed 54,000 francs into the Russian field-treasury.

Old Radetski, who was much beloved by his men on account of his mild and friendly manner,

and because he had held out so bravely for months on the Shipka Pass, sharing joys and sorrows, privations and cold, with his soldiers, was greeted with enthusiasm by the troops, drawn up in order of battle. He sat doubled up on a wretched little captured Turkish horse, which stopped every minute. He would then turn round to his chief of the staff, General Dmitrovski, who rode next him, and would say gently, "Dear Victor Ivanovich, just give him a touch up!" Victor Ivanovich would do so, and the Rosinante would start off again and go on till a few battalions farther on the same scene was repeated. Naturally, both we of the staff and the men in the ranks were much amused at all this.

After the review the generals lunched with Skobelev, who had brought all sorts of supplies, including champagne, with him, while we others had the pleasure of waiting outside in the cold. Still, what with talking with the afore-mentioned chief of the Turkish staff and a visit to the battlefield, we did not weary. On returning in the afternoon with Prince Mirski to Kazanlik, we saw great bands of dogs, numbering fifty or sixty each, and also vultures and crows, gorging themselves with the flesh of horses and men. A sad sight! As we afterwards learned, most of the bodies were allowed

to be disposed of in this way, as there were no hands to make grave-pits in the hard frozen soil. After the snow melted, many hundreds more of bodies were found in the hills and gorges of the Shipka, which poisoned the air of the whole neighbourhood. It was therefore better to leave them to the beasts and birds of prey.

I passed the evening quietly in my room at Kazanlik, occupied in writing letters and my diary.

So ended these days, which were of such importance for me and my future, and I can look back on them with the deepest thankfulness.

## CHAPTER XI

### KAZANLIK

As we could no longer live in the hospital, our staff moved into another house in Kazanlik, in which General Radetski was also living. Here I unfortunately had no separate room, but had to share one with the divisional adjutant, an unpleasant and also a very uncleanly man, who did not make my sojourn a happy one. Some clerks of the 8th Army Corps also worked in our room, and staff officers came and went, so that I had little peace and quietness, and consequently remained as much as I could with Prince Mirski. The town, which in ordinary times is a great centre of the trade in attar of roses, began gradually to refill with inhabitants. Many of the Turkish inhabitants had remained in it throughout, and the Bulgarians now returned daily in troops. Soon provisions were put on sale, though at first there was great scarcity of them, especially of bread ; but wine, even later on, was never to be had, and



even at the table of the Grand-Duke they at last were reduced to drinking water. On the contrary, many articles, such as attar of roses, carpets, and other Turkish productions, were to be had very cheap, probably because the shopkeepers were not their proper owners, and were only too glad to get rid of the goods they had annexed or stolen. Thus our interpreter bought from a Bulgarian a beautiful Turkish carpet, sufficiently large for a small room, for *one* rouble, *i.e.* about two shillings. Many hospitals had already been formed by the Turks in Kazanlik, but after the battle of Shipka the number of these was greatly increased, till almost every third house was marked by the red cross or red crescent. The numerous sick and wounded, for the treatment of whom the number of Turkish and Russian doctors was absolutely insufficient, poisoned the air in the little town, so that at last the general state of health became very bad. Personally I suffered from fever, and my neck began to swell and be painful again.

In the first few days of my stay in Kazanlik I had a long conversation with Colonels von Raben and Sobelev, both of whom were of opinion that I should try to get into the General Staff, for which they considered that I was well fitted, and they promised to

take steps to bring this about. Whether they did or not is unknown to me, but at any rate the attempt was unsuccessful; for, besides that in Russia one can only be transferred to the General Staff after passing the Staff College, even then, though the hatred of Germans was not so pronounced as it now is, they were not too eager to let a former Prussian officer have a look over the Russian cards. In addition, a much more agreeable transfer was proposed to me, for Prince Mirski, who had often spoken of my possibly being transferred to the Guards, one day said to me, "I should be perfectly satisfied with the termination of those successful days if I could get the Grand-Duke to transfer you to the Guard Corps; it shall be my first request to him."

Colonel Grohmann also, whom I visited in hospital, told me that he had sent in my name for a decoration in consequence of my behaviour in the Hainkioi valley, especially for the two reconnaissances with volunteers. I may here at once remark that I received the 3rd class of the Order of St. Anne with crossed swords, and the 4th class of the St. Vladimir, also with crossed swords. Prince Mirski had also proposed me for the golden sword of honour, which is equal to the 4th class Vladimir with swords, a proposal which was backed up by all

the authorities up to the Grand-Duke. The Emperor Alexander II., however, who usually approved at once of all such proposals, had with his own hand written, "Instead of the golden sword of honour, the 4th class of the St. Vladimir Order with swords." His late Majesty, who was always pleased to distinguish me highly, had, as he afterwards explained to me, made this change with the best intentions, as the 4th class Vladimir, besides many other rights—for example, hereditary rank among the Russian nobility,—confers the privilege of its holder's children being educated at the expense of the State, a right of which I, however, have never made use.

On the 12th January the Prince with his staff went to an open space outside the town, where, under command of Radetski, all the troops which had taken part in the battle of Shipka were drawn up for the inspection of the Grand-Duke Nicholas, the commander-in-chief, who, coming by the Shipka Pass, was expected to take up his quarters in Kazanlik.

The Grand-Duke, a fine-looking man, and very like his father, the Emperor Nicholas, mounted his horse not far from the review ground and galloped up to us, accompanied by a numerous staff. On his

breast glittered the star of the 1st class of the Order of St. George, an order which is only given to a Russian general for a decisive victory or the capture of a first-class fortress. The Grand-Duke had received it for Plevna, although the fall of this place came neither within the one category nor the other. He informed Radetski of his promotion to General of Infantry, and hung round his neck the 2nd class of the Order of St. George, for which the old general expressed his thanks with tears in his eyes. Prince Mirski learned that his name had been put forward for the 3rd class of St. George, and five soldiers' St. George crosses were awarded to each company.

Immediately after the Grand-Duke left us, Prince Mirski told me that he had taken advantage of the occasion to ask for my transfer to the Guard Corps, as a reward for my services, and that the Grand-Duke had granted his request, had expressed his approval of my conduct, and had said that probably it would be agreeable to me if I were posted to the regiment corresponding to the one in which I had served in Prussia.

The staffs of the Army Corps and of Prince Mirski's force usually dined together along with Radetski in the latter's room, and thus I came to make the old gentleman's acquaintance, and to be

very fond of him. He was of a cheery, merry, and friendly nature, such as one seldom finds in a general of his rank, but he had none of the qualities of a commander, and during the whole campaign was nothing but a simple sabreur without any views beyond mere fighting. Still I retain a most grateful recollection of him. My most pleasant evenings at Kazanlik were those on which I joined in a game of *yeralash* — so-called Siberian whist — which the old gentleman was so fond of that over it he frequently forgot his duties as a general, as I subsequently had occasion to notice during our advance.

In the first part of my reminiscences of the campaign, I have already mentioned that Prince Mirski had many enemies in the Grand-Duke's headquarters, from whose intrigues he had much to suffer. The Prince was certainly not what one calls a born leader of men, but he still was better than most of the selfish and purely self-seeking braggadocios in the Grand-Duke's immediate *entourage*, who, mostly men of mean minds, would not pardon the Prince's natural distinguished manner, which certainly often turned to haughtiness when in their society. At Kazanlik these intriguers had associated themselves with Skobelev, who desired to have

the victory of Shipka ascribed solely to himself, and who therefore tried hard to make little of the lion's share in it, which had been the portion of Prince Mirski. In this he was finally successful, as he completely won over Mirski's enemies at headquarters, and they poisoned the Grand-Duke's mind against the Prince.

The latter was much too proud to do anything to put a stop to all this, but he often expressed to me his disgust at all these mean intrigues. I often urged him not to sit with his hands folded, but to do something to defend himself, for he had numerous friends in high places, especially the Tsarevich, but he declined to move in the matter. Still these proceedings rankled in his mind and his spirits were much depressed. The Grand-Duke showed him marks of disfavour in all kinds of small ways, such as being pleased to dine with Skobelev but not with Mirski. They even tried to prevent the Prince getting his 3rd class of St. George. But not only did his enemies make his life a burden to him, even his friends contributed to this by serving up hot to him all the unfavourable utterances as to his conduct that they heard. Thus on one occasion the commander of the artillery, General Prince Massalski, A.D.C., came to him and said, "My old friend, you

have no idea how displeased they are with you at headquarters over that unfortunate affair at Elena." Such "friendship" embittered him more and more, and once he said to me, "How happy I should be if this war were over, and I could live with my wife and children! I should then try to forget everything which has any connection with this unhappy time. I entered on this war at the head of my fine division with the same pleasure that a girl feels when she goes to her first ball, but now I have nothing but sad recollections." He added that it was his intention to accept no further appointment after the war, as he would no longer serve under the Grand-Duke. I tried my best to quiet him, and expressed my conviction that the Emperor would certainly recognise his merits, but he would believe nothing of it. I may here remark that the Prince received the coveted St. George's cross, and after the war, as a reward for Shipka, was given a large grant of land in South Russia. For many years he has been Ataman of the Cossacks.

He showed me Skobelev's report of the battle, in which he in a really revolting manner ascribed all its success to himself, and hardly mentioned Prince Mirski. As characteristic, it struck me that he, who mentioned so minutely all the trophies of the battle,

even down to the number of Turkish cartridges, quite forgot to mention the Turkish treasure-chest. Prince Mirski, on the contrary, had in his report done due justice to Skobelev's share in the action, and had described his splendid advance in most glowing terms. I wonder whether Skobelev, on reading this report, felt ashamed. Prince Mirski observed, "I have five sons, who will not have much of this world's goods ; but one thing I can leave them, and that is my name, unspotted and untarnished, which, God be praised, has come out of this war also without taint." I now tried to turn the conversation into another channel, and succeeded so well that, to my delight, in a short time he was laughing heartily. So we passed from one thing to another, and at last he made very merry over the way in which a certain class of generals, who had made a name for themselves, and who therefore must be invited to Court, would behave there ; how after a few glasses of wine they would fall back into their natural barbarism, blow their noses with their fingers, and make other *faux pas*. He imitated those warriors very well—I afterwards saw them in St. Petersburg myself,—and in the end we spent a very merry evening, although I had to put severe restraint upon myself, as fever and headache were torturing me.



In the meantime the rumours of peace grew more frequent. The defeat at Shipka, by which it had been forced to give up the line of the Balkans, was a severe blow to the Turkish Government, and it now appeared to feel the necessity of peace, all the more as it was perfectly aware that no help was to be looked for from England, which promises so much and does so little. In any case the Turks urgently required an armistice, and tried to obtain one by every means in their power. On the 14th January two envoys from Reouf Pasha arrived in Kazanlik, and declared that an armistice had been concluded, which, of course, the Grand-Duke declined to believe, as he naturally ought to have heard something about it beforehand.

The Turkish Government now officially announced that it had deputed Server and Mahmud Pashas as plenipotentiaries to the Russian headquarters to treat for an armistice. This appeared to be promising, for Server Pasha was at this time ambassador in Paris, and had the reputation of being a man of European enlightenment, and a steadfast adherent of the peace party. The other plenipotentiary, however, Mahmud Pasha, seemed to have been sent to watch over his colleague, for he was a fanatical Mohammedan, well known for the atrocities he had committed, and one

who hated everything Christian. I saw him later on, and with his ferocious, bloodthirsty face, his short stature, and his large stomach, he looked the picture of the pasha in a child's story-book.

Great preparations were made for the reception of the two Turkish dignitaries, and about a hundred workmen were employed in making a house habitable for them—no light task under existing circumstances. The Grand-Duke himself supervised the works, and in Kazanlik nobody spoke of anything but the arrival of the Turks and the end of the war. The desire for the latter was universal.

Still, on the Russian side, there was no disposition to let this hope interfere with the successful turn which the war had taken, but, on the contrary, it was decided to occupy as much Turkish territory as possible, so as to hold it as a pledge. It was therefore determined to advance quickly on Adrianople, which was known to be strongly fortified and held by a large force.

Radetski's army, now united, was to advance by two roads and reunite in front of Adrianople, the main body under Radetski himself moving by Yeni-Sagra and Yamboli along the right bank of the Tunja, a tributary of the Maritsa, which joins the latter at Adrianople, and a flank column under

Skobelev marching by the left bank of the Maritsa by Hermanli. It was a slight on Prince Mirski that he, as the senior officer, should march as a simple divisional commander under Radetski, while his junior, Skobelev, had an independent command ; but he could do nothing, and had to obey the orders of the Grand-Duke in silence. On the 18th January Radetski began his march, Skobelev, if I mistake not, having started two days sooner.

## CHAPTER XII

### FROM KAZANLIK TO ADRIANOPLE

ON the 18th January our advance began. Colonel Sobelev belonged no more to the staff, having been sent by the Grand-Duke to St. Petersburg to give the Emperor a verbal report of the battle of Shipka, and Colonel von Raben and the divisional adjutant had ridden on ahead.

Our ride was uneventful. The first halting-place was Eski-Sagra, where at the beginning of the campaign, after his first crossing of the Balkans, Gurko had a severe action. When he was forced to retire again over the mountains, the Turks plundered and burned this exclusively Bulgarian town, and committed terrible atrocities in it. Eski-Sagra is about as large as Liegnitz, but I believe that not more than half a dozen houses had been spared by the flames. General Radetski, who arrived a few hours after us with his staff, had to find shelter with all his officers in a shed.

Prince Mirski and I took up our quarters together in a little room in one of the few unburned houses, in which unfortunately rats were rampant. We tried to encourage one another, but it eventually appeared that we both had a mortal horror of these animals, and bats also abounded, which I hate even more. It was a terrible night. We kept a light burning, but had little rest. Above us a regular army of rats was rioting; they had in all probability fled from the burned into the unburned houses, and had there bred and multiplied. In the middle of the night we heard also a cat above us giving out hideous cries of pain; it probably had been defeated in its battle with the rats, and was being eaten alive by them.

At any rate, we were glad on the following morning to leave our inhospitable quarters and to drive off in the Prince's carriage to Yeni-Sagra. Here an action had taken place between Gurko and the Turks, after which the latter had set fire to the town, but it was not so completely destroyed as Eski-Sagra. In this place Prince Mirski received his St. George's cross of the 3rd class by telegraphic orders from the Emperor, a great joy for us all, the more so as we saw how delighted he was with it. I got a bad cold in

Yeni-Sagra, and my neck again began to swell, causing me to be very ill.

I may here make a few remarks on some characteristics of Russian leadership, which will show how carelessly certain duties are performed. On the day after the battle we found a partially destroyed telegraph line between Kazanlik and Shipka, which no one paid the slightest attention to, although many of our "clever" General Staff officers must have ridden past it. I begged the Prince to give orders at once for it to be repaired and for an extension to be made from Shipka to the terminus of our own line on the St. Nicholas Hill. In two days' time this was done, and the Prince was greatly rejoiced at thus being put into telegraphic communication with St. Petersburg. Here, now, along our line of march through the important towns of Eski- and Yeni-Sagra and Yamboli there ran a double telegraph wire which was only very incompletely destroyed. It would have been a day's work only to repair it, and thus establish communication between Radetski's army and headquarters, but no one seemed to think of it, and communication was kept up by Cossack orderlies. It is incredible, but true, that we, who were only about 90 miles distant from

headquarters, were for five days without any news thence, and only heard four days after the event of the capture of the object of our march, Adrianople, by Skobelev, without firing a shot.

Although the Turks had as far as possible destroyed everything, we found large supplies of grain, principally wheat, in many places. If orders had been issued for those supplies to be reported, it would have been a very simple matter to set the existing mills going again, to grind the grain, and to have bread baked by the numerous bakers belonging to the troops, among whom the want of bread was severely felt. But nobody paid the slightest attention to it. The intendance did not follow the troops, and in the corps staff there was only one intendant, whose duties I never could make out. It was not in the interest of the intendance to take measures for the collection of those supplies, for then the Jewish contractors would have made nothing and the intendance officials would have lost their percentage.

The marching discipline was very defective. None of the higher officers gave orders as to what carriages were to accompany the columns, and in what order they were to march. I can testify personally that during the weeks I was

with the corps or divisional staff, I never saw or heard an order given as to the baggage. If a large body of troops marched out of a place, all the roads were at once blocked with two and if possible with three rows of waggons, and the troops following had to wait or make the best of their way through them.

General Radetski considered it superfluous to make arrangements for the field-post following us. He was on such bad terms with his wife that they never wrote to one another, and he therefore probably believed that other men were equally destitute of correspondents.

It was the most extraordinary march I have ever taken part in, and under Skobelev's command such irregularities would have been impossible. The whole army marched on one single wretched road on the right bank of the Tunja, whereas a much better road led by the left bank to Adrianople. Our cavalry division was far in our *rear*, and with our advanced guard there were only a few squadrons of Cossacks. Owing to this paucity of cavalry our front was so much narrowed that we could make no use of localities full of supplies lying 5 to 10 miles distant from the road; on the contrary, these were harried and plundered by bands of Circassians and



Bashi-Bazuks, who, encouraged by their immunity from interference on the part of the Russians, began at last to annoy our troops. Once even outposts had to be put out against them, which otherwise never was done. Determined hostile cavalry could have done us an incalculable amount of harm, but the energy of the Turks was broken.

Prince Mirski always said that disgust at those unmilitary proceedings was the real cause of my illness ; but this, of course, was only a joke.

In Yeni-Sagra we imagined that we were about to be attacked by those bands of Circassians. One morning I took a ride with the Prince in the neighbourhood of the town, and suddenly, at 500 paces off, we heard first single shots and then a regular fusillade. Of course we made sure that this was caused by one of the bands of Circassians, the approach of which had been reported on the previous day, and our position appeared to be an unpleasant one, as the troops had already left the town, and only a small and much scattered garrison had remained behind. In about three minutes, however, the firing ceased, and we saw the smoke of a burning building rising. Soon the affair was cleared up, and we learned that some soldiers had carelessly set a shed on fire, and that thereby the

whole of the reserve ammunition of the garrison had been blown up.

Our march was much hindered by the deep sticky mud, the like of which I have never seen before or since. To bring the guns and waggons along, as many oxen and buffaloes as possible were requisitioned, but the number obtained was quite insufficient. Fourteen horses were hooked on to every gun, and fourteen oxen or buffaloes to every *two*-wheeled ammunition cart, and yet the artillery could not march more than 2 to 3 kilometers an hour, although the country was tolerably level. When we received the news of Skobelev's occupation of Adrianople, we left the guns behind under escort of two battalions, and could then march forward with more freedom.

For me, personally, the march from Kazanlik to Adrianople was the most trying time of the whole campaign, as, suffering as I was from one of the most severe inflammations of the throat I have ever experienced, I came always into such wretched billets that there was absolutely no chance of taking the least care of myself. Since the beginning of the passage of the Balkans, with the exception of two days in Kazanlik, I had been continuously ill. I had, however, forced myself to keep up during the

days of fighting and the march on Adrianople, as, apart from our being under the impression that we should have to fight for that town, I did not want to be left behind sick in one of the deserted Turkish towns or still more miserable villages, where I should have been at the mercy of the ill-disposed population. My neck was very painful, and in addition I had rheumatism and pains in my left side which made breathing difficult. Twice I was on the point of fainting. To all this were added the horrible billets in Turkish villages, in dens which, in the prevailing bitter cold, were either impossible to warm or had broken windows, or none at all, and in which I had almost always to sleep on the bare mud floor, having only obtained straw on two or three occasions. Thus I dragged myself painfully forwards. In the last awful days, the moment I had arrived and dismounted, all I could do was to cower down in a corner, where I remained regardless of all that happened. I had no desire to eat; indeed the swelling in my throat made swallowing impossible, and in fact I could hardly breathe. I could not even swallow a morsel of biscuit steeped in water, and for three days I had nothing but two or three glasses of tea, the taking of which caused me the greatest pain.

On the 26th January we arrived at Tatarkioi, a wretched village about 22 miles from Adrianople, soaked to the skin by pouring rain. General Radetski kindly allowed me to share his room, a mere den with a mud floor and no windows, but with a stove in it. Besides the General, Prince Mirski and General Dimitrovski, the chief of the staff, were also accommodated in it. I was asked to take a hand at whist, and forced myself to do so for politeness' sake, but luckily the game did not last long.

On the next morning I started as early as possible, in advance of the others, for Adrianople, in the hope of finding shelter and medical aid there in the house of the German consul. The hope buoyed me up, and it was with indescribable pleasure that I first saw from a height the minarets of the second capital of Turkey in the distance ; already I imagined to myself a bed, good nursing, the German language, and German newspapers and books. Suddenly at about 7 miles from Adrianople I came to what in ordinary times would have been a rivulet, but the bridge over it was broken down, and it was so swollen with the rain that it was impossible to cross it either on foot or on horseback. So near to one's goal, and yet to be stopped !

Prince Mirski soon arrived, and immediately after him General Radetski and his staff. The latter decided that, as there was no longer any reason to hurry our march, he would halt and wait till the water went down, which would take two or three days, and established his headquarters in a ruined house near the rivulet, inviting the officers to join him in a rubber of whist. Nobody dared to try to turn him from his incredible resolve to await the falling of the water! I was beside myself with rage!

However, I took heart, and, as I must confess to my shame, more for my own interest than in that of the army, went straight to Radetski, passing over all my proper superiors, and proposed to him to throw a bridge over the rivulet. He was very friendly, but thought a bridge was quite useless as the water would have fallen by next morning. On my suggesting that more rain might come on and that I, at least, might go and search for a suitable place to throw a bridge, he said, "Don't trouble yourself; it is quite useless." I did not, however, lose heart, but the thought of having to spend perhaps several days in this wretched house with Adrianople under my eyes was positively torture to me, and Prince Mirski was of the same way of thinking. Ill as I

was, I therefore went along the bank of the rivulet, wading in the mud, and after a close search I found a place, which, according to the few ideas on the subject I had got when attached to the Guard Pioneer Battalion in Berlin, seemed to be suitable. It was not far from the old bridge, the beams and planks of which the Circassians had stupidly enough left on our side of the stream.

I now hastened to General Radetski, who in the meantime, I know not by what means, had become convinced that the configuration of the banks rendered the construction of a bridge impossible. I assured him to the contrary, and that one could be made in a few hours, whereupon he sent me to the commander of the Engineers. This officer, a colonel of pleasant manners who spoke German perfectly, received me in a most friendly manner. I apologised for venturing to interfere in the sphere of his duties, and said that as he had not come up I had taken the liberty of preparing matters for him. If he were satisfied with the spot I had chosen, General Radetski would certainly also give his consent. He appeared to be quite satisfied with this explanation, inspected the place, and declared that it was admirably suitable. The construction of the bridge was at once begun, and next morning at

7 o'clock it was ready; Prince Mirski and the others were delighted, and declared publicly that it was entirely due to me that the work had been carried out at all. I thought it so natural to build a bridge in this situation that the anecdote at once occurred to me of the Frenchman who was constantly complaining that, in spite of the best stockings, his feet were always dirty. On some one replying to him that it would be a good thing to try the effect of washing them, he cried out with joy, "*C'est une idée!*"

After the exertions of this day, and when I saw that my assistance was no longer necessary, my strength failed me, and I cowered down in a corner of the cold unheated room in which the Prince had taken up his quarters, and in which there was neither table nor chairs. I had no straw, and this attitude was the only one I could bear. Towards 10 o'clock at night my neck swelled up so that I feared I was going to choke, and I could not utter a word. Prince Mirski sent for a doctor, and after a long and terrible half-hour the regimental doctor of the Orel Regiment appeared, very drunk, as I at once saw. After he had looked at my throat, he ordered a Cossack to hold up my lantern, and in this uncertain light and with a trembling, dirty, and evil-smelling

hand, he made a cross cut in my right tonsil with an old penknife, which he drew from his trousers pocket. A stream of blood and matter rushed out, and I fell into a sort of faint, but soon fell asleep for the first time for many hours.

The following morning I still felt extremely ill, but rode out by the bridge, which was now ready, in advance of the staff, and accompanied by the divisional adjutant and the interpreter, to Adrianople, to get quarters ready for the Prince, and then to search for the German consul. Near Adrianople the divisional adjutant, who had day by day become more unfriendly to me, declared that as his horse had lost a shoe he could not go on with us, and left to me and the interpreter the work of finding quarters in the already overcrowded town. This want of conscientiousness in duty on the part of the adjutant was quite incomprehensible to me, and I should have liked to see a Prussian general whose adjutant behaved in a similar manner.

Thus on the 28th January, accompanied by the interpreter and a few Cossacks, I made my entry into Adrianople.



## CHAPTER XIII

### ADRIANOPLE

ON entering the city, my companions and I were witnesses of a great fire in one of the barracks in the suburbs. In the previous night a Guard regiment had been quartered there, and the men had been careless with lights, so that a conflagration was kindled which soon reduced the entire building to ashes, the whole of the ammunition belonging to the regiment being also destroyed. The latter sounded like heavy firing, so that we, 7 miles away, believed that the population must have risen.

I at once betook myself to the Austrian consul, who was also in charge of the interests of German subjects, but he was unable to get a dwelling-house for us, took no trouble about it either, and was not at all friendly, although he saw that I was ill. After waiting long at the town commandant's office, a house was told off to me as quarters for Prince Mirski and his staff.

On arrival before the house, which looked a very good one, I noticed a placard with the English consular stamp, on which was inscribed in three languages, "English house under the protection of Her Britannic Majesty's Consul."

I was now so ill that I could hardly sit on my horse, and if I had ridden back to the commandant's office I should certainly have had to wait for two hours more, so I directed the interpreter to make inquiries in the neighbourhood as to the reason for this placard, and found out that the house was not English but Turkish, as its style of building evidently proclaimed. I therefore determined at all costs to take possession of this house, to inform Prince Mirski, who was waiting at some distance from the town, as to its whereabouts, and to leave to him the task of fighting the question of occupation.

I therefore ordered the door to be opened. Knocking and ringing were in vain, for no answer came, and the house seemed deserted, so I ordered my Cossacks to beat in the door with the butts of their rifles. This at last produced a sign of life, for a fair-haired and impertinent-looking English boy about fourteen years of age opened the door and called out angrily in English that this was an English

house—at least so I understood him to say, and his words certainly conveyed no friendly invitation.

I was extremely weary, ill, and angry, and answered with all the English words at my command, and then, with my interpreter and a Cossack, and without troubling about the boy, I entered the house, and there found the widow of a Circassian, who told the interpreter that her husband was a distinguished officer who had been killed in action a few days before. After a few words of sympathy we continued our explorations, and found the house to be completely fitted up in the Turkish fashion, and in one room came upon a table with a lunch in European style laid out on it. In this room I sat down, and, sending the interpreter with a Cossack to the Prince, waited for what would turn up, the pain in my throat continually increasing.

After some time the above-mentioned boy and his younger brother began to come alternately every minute into the room, staring at me, and each time coming nearer, evidently with the thought in their heads, "Does he bite, or does he not?" I certainly did not present a very inviting appearance at that moment, for during the last few marching days I had had little time to look after matters of externals. After I had for some time taken no notice of the two boys, and

they had at last convinced themselves that I really did not bite, a very nicely dressed and pretty young woman came in, asked if I spoke French, and introduced herself as "Mrs. Frederick," daughter of the English missionary Rosenberg. I rose up, introduced myself, and told her that I was ill, and could not speak much. She then continued in German, and said that the interpreter had told her that her father must turn out of the house, but that it was an English house. I replied that, if this were really the case, the Prince and I would only ask for two rooms. She then repeated and asserted that it was an English house which belonged to her father, and that she had nothing whatever to do with it, as she lived with her husband on the other side of the street in a German house. Her husband soon came in and confirmed this, and at last the English missionary, Mr. Rosenberg, arrived. I went to meet him, shook hands with him, and introduced myself, upon which he received me with the words, "I am astonished to see you here; this is an English house." I thereupon referred him to the Prince, with whom he might settle everything, a prospect which did not appear very pleasant to him. Till his arrival we conversed quite amiably about the mission, the Moravian Brothers, and similar subjects, but he did

not please me at all, and his expressions and style were not those of a minister of the gospel.

At last Prince Mirski arrived. I need not describe the hot argument which followed, and shall only add that the whole story about the English house was a lie. Till the departure of the Turkish owner of the house, the missionary had lived opposite with his son-in-law, and had simply taken possession of the empty house, in the hope that he might thus make it his own, as frequently happened at that time. To help his countryman, the English consul had put up the aforesaid notice.

Mr. Rosenberg did not confess all this at first, and refused to give us accommodation, until at last the Prince ordered him out of the house. Then a battle royal ensued in which the English consul took part, and in which impertinent English newspaper correspondents mixed themselves up; the missionary, who showed himself more and more of a worldly turn of mind, made a strenuous resistance, till at last towards evening the Cossacks turned him out neck and crop, and we had peace. His wife, who, he had informed us, was extremely ill, although I had seen and spoken with her, and found her in perfect health, passed the night in the house, and moved out next morning; it was not much of a change of quarters, for they

had had no time to move their belongings into their newly acquired dwelling.

Opposite our house was a similar one, with numerous small grated windows, which we thought of using for the men of the staff, but which we could not get any one to open. On our knocking for some time, a fat old Turk came out of another house, and declared that the object of our wishes contained the harem of Sadik Pasha, the ladies of which he begged us to spare, as in the great hurry of the retreat they had not been able to follow their lord. This request was of course at once granted, and the Prince and I sent our best respects to the ladies, and assured them of our protection. A short time afterwards the same fat old Turk, who, we afterwards learned, was a eunuch, came to us with a large tray, on which was a cold lunch and *wine!* and with a message that the ladies begged to offer this to the officers. I was unfortunately unable to partake of this excellent food, but the Prince and Colonel von Raben did justice to it. We expressed our thanks through the interpreter, and our astonishment that such excellent wine should be produced from a harem, as it was a forbidden luxury. The old Turk only laughed till he fairly shook, and said nothing. I then, without being seen, had a good look at the

outside of the harem, and noticed that one of the little grated windows opened and a woman's head, with loose hair, and with a face like that of a pretty cook, appeared at it. I quickly drew Colonel von Raben's attention to this, but he looked round so incautiously that he was noticed, and the window was at once closed.

I now made myself as comfortable as possible by placing two sofas together to make a bed, and was delighted to have a room all to myself. I only missed my faithful servant Janke much. On the next day the doctor found my throat much better, and I myself could notice an almost hourly improvement, so that soon I was able to take a little meat, and in a few days I was completely well again.

Such was our entry into Adrianople.

I must now give a description of the town as it then appeared, and for this purpose shall transcribe word for word a letter which I wrote from Adrianople on the 3rd February 1878 ; indeed, almost all my reminiscences are taken either from letters written during the campaign, or from my diary, which I kept with great care.

"Coming from Yamboli, Adrianople is seen a long way off, and at a distance of more than 10 miles one can make out the minarets of its numberless

mosques, the most prominent of which is the splendid mosque of Sultan Selim. The joy of our soldiers on seeing the long-wished-for object of their marches was boundless, and this joy was not a little increased by the knowledge that a long siege of the town would not have to be undertaken, but that it had opened its doors to us, and that here we might hope to have a period of rest after the toils and hardships of the passage of the Balkans, and the dangers of the decisive battle of Shipka.

“The town is entered by a stone bridge, parts of the parapets of which are broken down, over the rapid Tunja. The pavement on this tolerably narrow bridge is so bad that crossing in a carriage is not without its dangers, and many a one has been thrown over into the Tunja. Such neglect on the part of the Government and administrative authorities is, however, common all over Turkey. Our first impression of the town, especially after such high expectations as we had formed, was decidedly disappointing. We forgot that though we had the second capital of the empire before us, it was still only a Turkish town, which is synonymous with dirt and all its evil concomitants.

“Soon one reaches the very narrow main street, the houses of which are almost all extremely ugly,



one-storied, very seldom two-storied, with quite narrow fronts and little low windows, all bearing the stamp of ruin and decay. Pavements are unknown in Adrianople, but in their stead the roadway is somewhat raised at the sides and provided with a sort of pathway of stones, to use which with safety, however, one requires to know something of the art of rope-dancing. The roadway itself is partly paved in a similar manner and partly left in its natural state, and it is hard to say which style is the worse. In the latter case it is usually covered with a layer of gravel, but during our stay in the place the rain caused such a sea of mud that it was impossible to distinguish the gravel from the stones. If any one wants to cross from one side of the street to the other, he makes use of stepping-stones, which the police or some compassionate soul has placed in the roadway at such distances apart that a strong man with a sure eye can reach the other side in two leaps. Arrived there, the passenger falls usually into the arms of a Cossack or some other Russian soldier: if an officer, he is kindly held up; if a Turk, he is simply allowed to fall into the mud.

“The streets are not lit up at night. The Turks think probably that if they have not always full moon they at least have a half moon, and therefore

save themselves the expense of lamps. Only in the court behind the Konak (palace) of the Grand-Duke a double row of lamps was set up, by order of the Russians, but in other parts every one who thinks that he may have to return home after dark goes out equipped with a lantern. Naturally thieves and robbers make a good thing out of this state of matters.

“ In Adrianople there are no hotels, or a least what we should term such. Only one single non-Turkish house calls itself the Hotel de l'Europe, but it lies in a distant quarter, and is only what one might term a 'shelter for man and beast.' The food, which is prepared by a Bavarian cook, is tolerably good and cheap, and in this 'hotel' there are six rooms with beds, but the less said about the latter the better.

“ All these evils are, however, only felt by those who know better things, and who are forced always to live here, but we birds of passage trouble ourselves very little about them, and, in comparison with our former life on the march and in half-burned towns and villages, the town offers much to be seen and to be admired. The street traffic is well worth observing, and as most of the Turkish population have sensibly remained in their houses, or at least soon returned to them, the red fez is decidedly in a majority in the

streets. We all noticed what characteristic faces the men of the Turkish lower classes had ; the costume of course helps to mark them as a race apart, but by no means the costume alone. The old Turks especially have something Jewish in their countenances, but still nothing unpleasant, only the type of face of the old Hebrews as painted by Doré.

“Trade and commerce are in full swing. On both sides of the main street are nothing but booths, in which the possessor sits comfortably with crossed legs smoking his chibuk, while his younger help-mates belaud their wares to the passers-by, either in Turkish or Greek, and even in Russian or in execrable French. In the streets themselves are also numerous hawkers. The main centre of business is, however, the so-called *Passage*, a dark street running between the main street and another, which is only open till 4 P.M. In it the shops are crowded together. Tobacco merchants and dealers in food and spirits drive the best business, and much fruit and sweetmeats are sold. The goodness of the latter, even in the most common shops, exceeds anything known in Germany, and the prices are extraordinarily cheap. Sewed work, carpets, and table-cloths are to be had in plenty, as also gold and silver embroidery. The money-changers, how-

ever, make the best business of all, and are to be found at the corner of every street ; they cheat our soldiers in the most barefaced way.

“ A few cab-drivers have remained behind, and are reaping a golden harvest. Thus a general I know took a cab the other day, in which he drove round for about an hour, and had to pay half an imperial, or, at that time, about nine roubles paper money, for it. I believe that the Turkish mercantile community will greatly regret our departure.

“ The centre of military life is naturally the Grand-Duke's headquarters, most of the members of which are billeted in the Konak. In a neighbouring house live the Turkish pashas, who are here to treat for the peace preliminaries, over the signature of which so many tears have been shed. They are much honoured by the Grand-Duke. Colonel Count Tolstoi has been placed at their absolute disposal as aide-de-camp, and his duties are certainly no sinecure. The Grand-Duke has often invited them to dinner, but they prefer to dine alone as much as possible.”

The Konak is an unpretending building built round a large courtyard on the main street, but it contains a large number of rooms, which were now packed full. In the courtyard there was always a

photographer ready to take groups or single persons. In the streets one met troops of all descriptions, for with the exception of the Preobrajensk and Semenov Regiments, the whole of the Guard Corps, in addition to our troops, was quartered in the town. It was wonderful to see how quickly the men made themselves understood by the inhabitants, and the best relations soon sprang up between them. One saw often Turkish soldiers, naturally without arms, and even Circassians, the latter of whom looked with evil eyes at the Cossacks, and especially at those of the Caucasus, their home, who formed the headquarters escort, and from whose uniform theirs was only distinguished by a half-moon on the cap. It would have been much more agreeable to them to meet their brethren who were serving the Russian enemies on the open field than in the street.

Traffic regulations there were none, and certainly the Russian town - commandant, at that time Skobelev, might have done something in this direction. In the main street there was a dense crowd the whole day, and one had to be on one's guard so as not to be ridden or driven over. Only when it was announced that the Grand-Duke was about to ride or drive out was some sort of order arrived at, and the Cossack outriders soon made a

lane with their whips in a most efficient manner. The fair sex were naturally hardly ever seen in the streets, and the few exceptions had hardly any necessity for wearing their semi-transparent veils, for even without them no one would have dreamed of looking at them twice.

The Turkish and Greek families, which had had the good sense to remain in their houses, lived there perfectly unmolested, and were mostly very pleasant hosts to their Russian officer guests. The presence of these was a sure protection for their house and property, and they lived on the best of terms with them. Many a one, especially among the younger officers, made himself so much at home in Adrianople that it was only with a heavy heart that he left it.

Naturally the great topic of interest was the negotiations of the plenipotentiaries at the Konak. The well-known former ambassador, Count Ignatiev, had arrived—one of those Panslavistic personages who had done most to bring on the war, and who, as already mentioned, had, on the first failures, fallen into disgrace, but now, when things were going well, was received back into favour. Great things were expected from his diplomacy at these negotiations, and everybody was dreaming of a speedy

return home. Early on the 31st January we knew that on that day either the question of the signature of the preliminaries of peace would be decided or that hostilities would be reopened. Still no one doubted that there would be peace, and no man would have believed that we should have to sit another six months before the gates of the Turkish capital. The Grand-Duke, who had become impatient at the delays, had declared that he would no longer receive Server Pasha and his associates if by 5 o'clock the conditions of peace were not brought to him signed.

About 1 o'clock I was with Prince Mirski, who told me that he was about to go to the Grand-Duke to hasten my transfer to the Guard. He remained there a long time, and came back towards 5 o'clock with the report that the Grand-Duke had given orders that, pending my definite transfer, I was to be attached to the Preobrajensk Regiment, the Russian First Foot Guards. Great as my joy was, I could not but feel that my position there, as a former Prussian officer and as an interloper, would be a very difficult one.

The question of the moment was, however, war or no war.

At 7 o'clock the same fat commander of our

artillery, who, during the battle of Shipka, had been in such a hurry to get back to the Balkans, came to me and told me that the peace preliminaries had been signed. I must freely confess that my joy was great, for I had not entered upon this war with the same enthusiasm as in 1866 and 1870, and, although I had had a certain amount of success in the subordinate position in which I had found myself, I was heartily glad that it seemed to be at an end.

Soon after the artillery general came Lieutenant-Colonel Skugarevski, my commander in the Hainkiöi valley, and we had a long talk over my prospects of a transfer to the Guard. He did not appear to have any great confidence in the promises of the Grand-Duke, and made me quite alarmed on the subject, for I had learned enough to know that, especially in Russia, there is a great difference between promising and performing. I therefore went to the Konak, to get more precise news from Colonel Kladishchev, and there, failing to find the Colonel, I met the Grand-Duke in a passage. He beckoned to me in a very friendly manner, and asked how I was and whether I had seen a lot of the fighting. Then he said, "I shall now try to get you attached to the Guard; that will be agreeable to you, will it not?" To this I replied, "There is nothing I desire more,



your Imperial Highness." He then kindly patted me on the shoulder and went into his room.

Later on I supped with Skugarevski and the General Staff officers of the Guard Corps. Lieutenant-Colonel Baron Krüdener, whose acquaintance I had made in Tirnova, and who was then acting chief of the staff, received me in a most friendly manner. His opinion was that I could now do nothing in the matter, but that it would be better if I had tried to get into the Semenov instead of into the Preobrajensk, *i.e.* into the 2nd instead of the 1st Regiment. The performance of duty and the *camaraderie* in the former were much more satisfactory than in the latter, for the officers of the Preobrajensk regiment were very proud, and kept very much to themselves, not mixing at all with those of other regiments, spent a great deal of money, and considered themselves superior to the officers of the rest of the Guard. Naturally I kept silence when he was relating all these details (perfectly erroneous, as I found out later), and this I have often found a good plan if you want others to talk.

On the 4th February General Radetski informed me that, although the formal order for my transfer had not yet been received, I was at liberty to report

myself to the temporary commander of the Preobrajensk Regiment—the actual commander, Prince Obolenski, had not yet recovered from his wounds received at Philippopolis—and to the brigade-commander, Prince Alexander of Oldenburg. I betook myself to them with a somewhat anxious mind. The temporary commander, Colonel Avinov, A.D.C., received me very heartily, as did also Prince Alexander; and both mentioned that they had heard my conduct highly spoken of. I also met there a staff captain of my new regiment, Prince Nesvitski, a handsome gipsy-like man with an evil-looking face, who was with Prince Oldenburg's aide-de-camp, Prince Galitsin.

On the same day the 8th Army Corps, *i.e.* the 9th and 14th Divisions, to which I had hitherto belonged, had a great dinner, in which all of the staff officers and the brigade and regimental commanders took part. The Grand-Duke Nicholas's son, then twenty-two years old, a tall, handsome, and dignified young man, but even then as arrogant and distant as he still is, was also present. It was my first big dinner along with Russian officers, and the thoughts and recollections which arose within me did not quite conduce to a festive turn of mind. Colonel von Raben and Lieutenant-Colonel Skugarev-

ski asked me to sit with them, and so we could converse quite freely ; opposite me also sat General Staff officers. One toast after another was drunk, but I felt the want of one for the Emperor William. Colonel von Raben perceived this and asked those sitting near us to touch glasses to his health, for which I thankfully pressed his hand. The incident had, however, not passed unremarked, for immediately afterwards the chief of the staff of the 9th Army Corps, General Lipinski, who was sitting opposite, stood up and, after getting Radetski's permission, called upon all to drink to the health of the Emperor William, "the best friend of Russia," a toast which really was received with the greatest enthusiasm, and there seemed to be no end to the hurrahs. Almost all those present, even General Radetski himself, came round to me and touched glasses with me "to the health of our Vassili Fedorovich." In fact I was looked upon and treated as a Prussian officer. Many officers came to me and asked if I could not get Prussian orders for them, to which requests I naturally gave evasive answers.

During the whole dinner the tone of all present was very quiet and moderate, which I certainly had not expected at the end of a successful war. Cer-

tainly the wine was so vile as to be hardly drinkable. After dinner a few officers danced Russian dances or sang national songs, but this soon ceased. One regimental commander, whose name I only learned much later, swore eternal friendship with me and presented me with his photograph.

To my joy, I was asked to join in a rubber of whist with General Radetski, General Lipinski, chief of the staff of the 9th Army Corps, and the fat artillery general, and so I passed a very pleasant evening and was home by 10 o'clock. Later, when the senior officers retired, the fun grew fast and furious among those who remained.

At that time, as the toast to the Emperor William showed, the general feeling was quite friendly to Prussia. Some days before, during dinner at the Grand-Duke's, an order of the day, issued by Prince August of Württemberg to the Prussian Guard Corps, in which he warmly congratulated their Russian comrades, had been read out. All the senior officers of the Guard had been invited to this dinner, and when the Grand-Duke, after reading the order, had proposed the Emperor William's health, the enthusiasm was so great that the cheering lasted for several minutes. All touched glasses with the Prussian General Staff officers, von

Lignitz and von Villaume, kissed them, and expressed their reverence for the Emperor William. From them I heard the details of the dinner. The Grand-Duke afterwards invited them to his room, where he told them how much he admired his aged uncle, how thankful he was to him, and how he felt himself quite a Prussian; he also thanked those officers for their conduct during the war, as it had tended to knit still closer together the ties between Russia and Germany.

Hardly a year had passed before this enthusiasm of friendship had evaporated, and had given place to such a wild hatred that Germany had to secure herself by an alliance with Austria against her former friend!

In describing our entry into Adrianople I mentioned that opposite us was the harem of Sadik Pasha. As a lunch had been sent to us from it, Prince Mirski made further inquiries, and learned that there was no harem there at all, that Sadik Pasha, a Pole by birth, was married in Christian fashion, and that his wife with several other ladies lived in that house. That, then, was why the old Turk had laughed so slyly at us! Prince Mirski, who was extremely desirous of making the lady's acquaintance, visited her, and found no traces of

a harem except that the windows were grated. Madame Sadik Pasha, a lady of about sixty, lived in a charmingly-furnished house a little back from the street, and with her daughter, the wife of a Pole named Suchodolski, in the Turkish service, and the daughter of the latter, a girl of sixteen. It was a curious coincidence that Suchodolski's brother, a Russian officer and aide-de-camp to Skobelev, was also at that time in Adrianople, but there was no communication between the lady and her hostile brother-in-law.

Prince Mirski often visited in the house, and one day asked me to accompany him, although I had not previously called. I did so, and passed a very pleasant evening. The old lady spoke little, but her daughter, a good-looking lady of thirty-six, who had been brought up in Paris, made up for that. The grandchild, who also had been educated in Paris, was such a pronounced coquette that I troubled myself very little about her. I there also made the acquaintance of M. Onou, secretary to the Russian Embassy in Constantinople, and of a former Austrian officer and his wife, in the latter of whom I recognised the face I had seen at the window, which Colonel von Raben had frightened away. Our conversation was carried on in French, and it was a

curious feeling to mix with ladies in a *salon* after several months on field service.

Once Prince Mirski sent me to the English missionary Rosenberg to arrange about the question of the occupation of our house. Soon after this I was visited by the evangelical pastor, Loesch, attached to the Russian headquarters, who, as I had mentioned to Rosenberg that I was very anxious again to attend a German divine service, was good enough to come to inform me that he proposed holding one on the next day. It was a pleasant feeling once more to hear God's word in my own beloved language after such a long time, especially as Pastor Loesch delivered a very good sermon upon the text of St. John, chap. viii., verses 31, 32. There were fourteen of us in a hired room, among whom were Baron Krüdener, hitherto commanding the 9th Army Corps, on whom, not altogether wrongly, the blame of the first defeat at Plevna had been laid, his two sons, Colonel Hasenkampf of the General Staff, the historian of the war, whom I have mentioned in the first part of this work, Major von Lignitz, Dr. Obermüller, and others.

I made new acquaintances every day. Thus one day I met at the Konak a personage very well known in Vienna, a Baron Carlos Gagern, a brother,

if I mistake not, of the Gagern so famed in 1848. He had been an officer in the Prussian Guard Artillery from 1848 to 1850, had then served twenty years in the Mexican republican army, and had been several times wounded in the fights against Maximilian. He used to relate many interesting things of those times, and was very severe in his opinion of Maximilian; it was, however, displeasing to me that, when the conversation turned upon religion, he declared that he had none whatever.

When I returned from the Konak that day—it was my birthday—I found my orders to join the Preobrajensk Regiment for duty. All doubts were now at an end. I employed my few remaining days in Adrianople in paying farewell visits to those officers of the regiment I had hitherto belonged to who were most intimate with me, and in viewing the sights of the town. The officers of the Elets Regiment were most hearty in their good wishes, and I felt that, in spite of the short time I had been in the Regiment, I had won their good-will. In after years I met several of the senior officers again here and there. At Shipka the regiment had lost many officers, and one of my best friends died in the hospital at Kazanlik of his wounds. He was an



officer of the Frontier Guards and a very poor man, and, having no means to educate his children, he had applied to the Government for aid. The answer was that the State could only undertake the free education of his children if he entered a regiment on active service, and so, after much trouble, he had got himself transferred to the Elefs Regiment. Now, at any rate, his children would be looked after by the State.

My parting with my dear good Colonel Grohmann, from whom I had received so much kindness, was a most hearty one. I often saw him afterwards in St. Petersburg, and shall always regret his sad end.<sup>1</sup>

Among the sights of Adrianople is the mosque of Sultan Selim, a beautiful building, which, however, did not rouse any feelings of reverence in my breast, and made no impression on me. One enters first a large courtyard, in which there is a fountain, in which several Turks may be seen washing their feet, a very necessary process, and then one passes into the mosque itself, which looks its best when lighted up in the evening. It consists of a high cupola borne upon columns so thick that it took twenty-five of my paces to walk round them. Numberless lamps hang from the roof, and the floor is covered with

<sup>1</sup> He shot himself a few years after the war in the "Hotel Demut" at St. Petersburg. I had spoken with him shortly before. The true motive for this sad deed was unknown.

straw mats. Before entering, most Turks take off their shoes, but if they forget to do so they are reminded of the omission by a half-starved-looking dervish who stands at the door. It was amusing to see how a Russian guard of a lance-corporal and three men inside the mosque eagerly assisted the dervish in his work of enforcing Mohammedan customs, and at once pounced upon any Turk entering with his shoes on. The Russians naturally kept their own boots on.

In the evening Lieutenant-Colonel Baron Krüdener, acting chief of the staff of the Guard Corps, already so often mentioned, dined with us. He was a pleasant man, a little over thirty years of age, and Prince Mirski told me that he had a young wife whom he absolutely adored. In the course of our conversation the Prince mentioned her, and laughingly said that she could hardly expect him home yet. Thereupon his eyes filled with tears, and he said, "Ah, you do not know that I lost my wife a few weeks ago; she died after her confinement. Everybody desires to go home, but, as far as I am concerned, the war may go on for ever, for on my return I shall only find an empty house." We naturally had not expected such an answer to the jocular words of the Prince, and it made a deep impression

on us all. The conversation flagged, and I was glad when I was called away to see Mr. Rosenberg, whom I strongly disliked, as he still was not contented with the settlement of the question about the house. On this occasion he assured me that the majority of the English Parliament was for war, and would never permit an occupation of Constantinople, and that the English fleet was on its way to protect the Turkish capital. At that time we did not believe this news, which was afterwards so fully confirmed. Rumours were also current that Austria was making difficulties for Russia, and that Roumania was unwilling to cede Bessarabia to Russia, and receive the desolate Dobrudja in exchange as the reward for the material aid she had rendered to Russia. The influences which afterwards, at the Congress of Berlin, operated so disastrously for Russia were beginning to make themselves felt, and even then Germany was reproached with not having sufficiently taken the part of her friend and ally Russia. In spite of all the friendship between the two monarchs, the long-existing hostility in Russia to Prussia and Germany began at that time to gain fresh force, and soon developed into that absolute hatred which to this day, after thirteen years, keeps Europe in constant dread of war.

It was remarkable how, after the later successes,

the Russian officers, and especially those of the General Staff, began to boast and brag, considering themselves invincible. The defeats of the past year and the discouragement which had reigned, especially at headquarters and in the General Staff, appeared to be forgotten. One often heard, when any specially daring feat was mentioned, "Ah, that could only be done by Russian soldiers!" Prince Mirski, however, expressed himself in quite a different way as to the war, and thought that it should not be mentioned in the Russian military schools, or mentioned only to bring to notice the faults committed. He expressed himself most strongly on the absolute incapacity and dissolute life of the Grand-Duke Nicholas, and especially condemned his connection with the former singer Chislova, to whom at that time large sums were paid. The Grand-Duke did not scruple to use the field telegraph to send messages to her, and even the lowest clerks knew all about this scandal.

I was glad, on the whole, to leave Adrianople, for the behaviour of the people, sullen at first, began to be absolutely hostile, and attacks by Turkish inhabitants on Russian officers and soldiers became daily more frequent. Thus for eight days Colonel Abrasimov of the Guards was missing. He had incautiously gone out unarmed to visit a friend living only

a few hundred paces off, and his body was found in a well with the throat cut and several stabs. Four Turks were arrested as the probable criminals, but I do not know how the matter ended. The unfortunate man was married, and the father of several children, and had gone through the whole war unwounded and with distinction.

My faithful Janke had arrived, but minus the carriage, instead of which he had annexed a Turkish horse ; where, I could never quite make out. He met me in the street, but I was so much altered by my severe illness that he did not recognise me. As he was not allowed to pass with the carriage, he had very sensibly left it with the baggage to come on by slow marches. As I did not require it any longer I sold it before its arrival, naturally at a loss, to a captain of my regiment, who engaged to send my tent, camp-bed, and other articles, which were loaded on it, to St. Petersburg ; but I never again saw a sign of them. I still regret having lost my good tent.

On the 16th February I said good-bye to Prince Mirski and his staff, which was a painful process. The Prince embraced me with tears in his eyes. We had, indeed, passed through memorable events together, and these formed a close connection between us. Although I was certain of often seeing

the Prince again, it was painful for me to give up my intimate relations with a man whom I had learned to love and respect so much, and on whose staff, with the exception of the time I was ill, I had enjoyed myself as much as was possible under existing circumstances. Prince Mirski is the only man I have met during my sojourn in Russia who has done anything for me without ulterior motives. Afterwards, during the twelve years I passed in Russia, I had many opportunities of making friends with persons in high places, both German and Russian, and even of rendering them services, but not one of them has ever raised a finger in earnest to help me. It is always a pleasing thought to me that all I afterwards attained to was reached without external help, but I shall never think of Prince Mirski except with feelings of profound gratitude. How often have I later on in St. Petersburg expressed this to him when he visited me and mine, and we fought our battles over again! As already mentioned, some years after the war he became Ataman of the Cossacks, and this high post he still holds.

## CHAPTER XIV

### FROM ADRIANOPLE TO SAN STEFANO

ON the forenoon of the 18th February I left Adrianople. The railway station is an ugly, dirty, wooden building, like all those on the Adrianople-Constantinople line, and disorder reigned supreme in it. Although the country from Adrianople downwards was in possession of the Russians, the railway was still managed by Turkish officials, or by those employed by the builder of the line, the notorious Baron Hirsch. In my compartment a Russian officer, who had been severely wounded in a fight with Circassian bandits, had travelled on the previous day, and evidently his wounds had been dressed in it also, for there were great stains of blood on the seats and on the floor. The train passed close by several fortifications which had been thrown up with great skill under English superintendence, and from which one could easily convince oneself that an attack on the town would have been attended with

great loss of life. It can only be ascribed to the cowardice of their government that the Turks threw up the sponge so quickly.

The country through which the line ran was very ugly and bare ; on both sides one saw nothing but uncultivated fields, the barren look of which bore testimony to the extent to which the country had suffered from the war. The difference in nationality of the train personnel was most striking. The conductors and guards all spoke several languages, most of them German and Italian ; indeed, I was told of one conductor who spoke Turkish—the official language of the railway—Italian, Greek, French, and English, and who could also make himself understood in German. At the refreshment rooms at the stopping places, mostly wretched sheds, dear and abominable victuals were sold on prepayment only ; for example, I had to pay a franc for a small piece of cheese which was scarcely sufficient to cover two rolls. On arrival at Chorlu, one of the larger stations, we learned that the train would not proceed farther in the direction of Constantinople, as about 16 or 17 miles off a band of some 1500 Circassians and Bashi-Bazuks had collected, against whom a battalion had already been sent. These had committed horrible atrocities in a Greek village on the railway, and murdered all



the inhabitants, even the women and children, who had remained behind. These scoundrels were now, after the armistice, a great plague to Turkey; the Circassians especially refused all obedience to the Turkish authorities, and declined to accept the land which was offered to them by the Turkish Government in Asia, which they might cultivate, and where they might, if so disposed, murder one another. The Circassians belonged to the Caucasus, and after its conquest by Russia had migrated from it, and had had land assigned to them by the Turks in Bulgaria and Rumelia. There they were the terror of the Christian inhabitants, as they were utilized by the Government to oppress them. In war they formed the main portion of the Turkish cavalry, and did good service against the hated Russians; in fact they made themselves so feared among the Cossacks that the brave sons of the Don always gave way before them, unless they were in considerable superiority of numbers. It was entirely due to the horrible cruelties perpetrated by the Circassians and Bashi-Bazuks against the Christian inhabitants that the war assumed that barbarous character which, happily, is quite unknown among civilized nations.

As we only arrived late in the evening at Chorlu,

and the station was very far from the town, I tried to get accommodation at the former, and to my great joy found shelter with the stationmaster, a German named Górlitz. He most hospitably offered me not only his room, but his bed with clean sheets, and I thoroughly enjoyed this luxury for the first time for five and a half months. Unfortunately, the time was only too short. Thanks also to the kindness of Mr. Górlitz, I got my servant and horses put up in a horse-box. The unfortunate animals were very badly off, as their only forage was straw and chaff, which Janke managed to find somewhere. To my delight, however, I discovered a Russian magazine, and from it, after many difficulties, and only by the aid of Staff-Captain Skorduli, adjutant of the Guard Corps, whom I met by chance in the station, I succeeded in getting a bag of 200 lbs. of hard biscuit, probably that from Mr. L.'s manufactory. The horses were now provided for for a long time, and, as they had good teeth, the biscuit, steeped in water, was most acceptable to them. Janke also used the biscuit; at least I heard him some time afterwards cursing deeply to himself because it refused to become soft when soaked in tea.

I passed a very good night, but was wakened very early by Janke with the alarming news that the

train, with my horses, was moving off. The thought of missing my only means of conveyance to Constantinople was not very pleasant, but still, as I was for the first time for so long in a bed, and had taken off all my clothes, I could not at once rush out, and so told Janke to go to the stationmaster. The latter came in laughing with the good news that the vanished train had already reappeared, and that only a little shunting was going on. Janke was, however, much excited over this circumstance for some time.

On the next day I went to the little town of Chorlu to report myself to the acting commander of the Guard Corps, Lieutenant-General Count Shuvalov. It was with a certain timidity that I came to join this, to me, hitherto unknown corps, which occupies such an exceptionally privileged position in the Russian army that the officers of the line are not looked upon as comrades of the same army by its officers, and even the men look down with a certain sense of superiority on their less-favoured fellow-soldiers.

On entering the town, the superior discipline maintained, as compared with that in places occupied by line troops, was at once apparent. The greatest order and cleanliness reigned in the streets, and

were maintained by numerous soldiers employed as policemen, and recognisable as such by a large metal badge. All the streets were marked with Russian names on wooden boards, such as George Street, Divisional Street, Guards Street, Count's Street—the latter so called because Count Shuvalov had taken up his quarters in it. The various offices were marked by signboards with their designations. Dead cattle, horses, buffaloes, and oxen were not, as usual, left lying in the streets, but were dragged to a large ditch outside the town, and then probably earth was afterwards piled over them. I counted forty bodies in it.

When I saw, later on, the disorder and uncleanness in San Stefano, where also Guard troops were quartered, I learned that the strict order hitherto maintained was entirely due to an officer of gendarmerie on the staff of the corps, who was always supported in his strict measures by Count Shuvalov. San Stefano was, however, the headquarters of the Grand - Duke Nicholas, and as long as these remained there the usual disorder reigned supreme.

Count Shuvalov received me in a most friendly manner, spoke very kindly of my past career, and showed himself to be a considerate, well-meaning

commanding officer, which he always was towards me the whole time I had the honour of serving under his orders.

In the afternoon I visited Baron Krüdener, and learned from him that the Preobrajensk Regiment had already marched for Silivri, and was to be quartered in one of the localities near Constantinople, on the Sea of Marmora. I was desirous of catching up the regiment as soon as possible, but was told by several people that the road was not safe for single horsemen, as Bashi-Bazuk scoundrels were scouring the country in all directions. In vain I tried to get a Cossack as escort, or even a trustworthy guide. In an inn I met two railway officials, a French-speaking Greek and a German, and the former offered to find me a guide, and in a short time returned with a Turk whose appearance did not inspire much confidence. While the Greek was making arrangements in Turkish with him in a low voice the German whispered to me, "Don't trust the Greek ; he is a false, dangerous fellow." Whether this was true or not I do not know, but at any rate, as I saw that the professed guide was speaking in a suspicious manner with several other Turks, I declined to employ him. I had therefore only my servant to rely on, and I ordered him to take my

sixteen-shooter Circassian repeating carbine, so as to be ready for all emergencies.

These preparations were, however, unnecessary, for in the waiting-room I met an officer of the Semenov Guard Regiment, whose acquaintance I had already made in Sistova on my journey to headquarters at Gorni-Studen, and learned to my great joy that early on the following morning he was going to start on the same journey as I, as he had to bring money to his regiment, which, along with mine, formed the 1st Guard Infantry Brigade. With this view he had been given an escort of twenty-five men. I was therefore relieved from all care, and passed a pleasant evening at the railway station with Lieutenant Menshukov, who was to be my travelling companion, and the above-mentioned Staff-Captain Skorduli.

Our departure next day was delayed till 12 o'clock, which gave me an opportunity, for the first time for many months, of reading a tolerably new German newspaper, which the stationmaster had just received. From it I learned the death of Pope Pius IX., which, as I had always attentively followed the phases of the "Kulturkampf," was of great interest to me, and was the subject of a long conversation between me and Mr. Görlitz.

At last we started, our road leading through a waste, sterile, and ugly country, in which I was very glad to be in good company. It was pleasant to see what excellent order Lieutenant Menshukov maintained among his men. Everywhere, on both sides of the road, were the carcasses of dead animals, and if one did not at first see them one's olfactory nerves soon bore testimony to their presence. In a very lonely place, about 40 paces from the road, I saw what looked like a human body, and on riding up saw a horrible sight. The bodies of two murdered women, probably mother and daughter, lay before me. I could not see any wound on the elder, a woman of from thirty to forty, but the breast of the younger, a girl of about fifteen, was covered with blood, apparently proceeding from a dagger wound. The murder must have been preceded by a struggle, for, especially in the case of the mother, the hair was much disordered and the faces frightfully distorted, and all around were shreds of clothing.

As we could only move slowly on account of the waggon, we only covered about 14 miles, or about half of the journey to Silivri. Towards 6 o'clock we reached the half-destroyed and abandoned village of Simin, where we made ourselves as comfortable as possible, which is not saying much. Still, on the march from

Kazanlik to Adrianople I had got accustomed to bad quarters. As the neighbourhood was so unsafe, the officer, on my advice, quartered all the men in one house together, and allowed no one to leave the village, and a sentry was placed over the waggon with the money.

Early on the 21st February, before daybreak, we left Simin. The road was monotonous at first, but afterwards led along the shore of the beautifully blue Sea of Marmora, and towards mid-day we reached the pretty little town of Silivri, which the Preobrajensk Regiment had quitted on the previous day, and where we found billets in the Konak. The acting town-commandant, Lieutenant P. of my new regiment, who spoke German very fluently, received me very kindly, told me that every one was looking forward with pleasure to my joining the regiment, and gave me much information about it and its officers; in short, he was very communicative. As I noticed in the course of conversation, he was slightly tipsy, which I afterwards learned was by no means uncommon with him.

Next day we left Silivri and arrived at 2 o'clock at Kalikrat, where I met my new regiment. The companies were coming back from drill, and I waited for the 4th, as it was commanded by a Captain von Adlerberg, whose acquaintance I had



made in Berlin, where for several days I had been his guide. He received me most heartily, and introduced me to his company officer, a young Prince Krapotkin, who at first seemed to me to be very nice. I at once reported myself to Prince Obolenski, the commander of the regiment, who had just recovered from his wounds and reassumed command, and found him to be a handsome, elegant-looking man, but very reserved. As I learned later on, he was much annoyed at my being appointed to the regiment without, as is usual, his consent being first obtained. Prince Obolenski did not, however, bear a grudge against me on that account, and was in later years one of the most charming commanding officers I have ever served under. Accompanied by Adlerberg, I then called on all the officers of the regiment, which was all the easier as they were invariably billeted several in one house. All received me in a most friendly manner as men of the world, and not one let it appear that I was considered an interloper, and a Prussian interloper to boot. Most spoke French; some began to speak Russian with me, as Prince Obolenski desired, which I found quite right. In spite of this outwardly friendly reception, I could easily see that it would be much more difficult to make myself at home here

than it had been among the rough, but in general good-natured and simple-hearted, officers of the Elefs Regiment ; in any case I saw that my position would be difficult.

It had in the meantime become late, and I accepted Adlerberg's kind invitation to share his quarters, although he warned me to look out for bad dreams in them. I slept very restlessly and had horrible dreams, but at 1 o'clock in the morning they were suddenly interrupted by the alarm sounding, and the regiment received orders to march at once. My new duties therefore began in a most martial manner.

At 2 o'clock we were formed up outside the town, at a bridge leading over an arm of the sea, as part of a force of all arms forming the advance guard, under the Duke of Oldenburg, of the Guard Corps, which was forming up in our rear. Count Shuvalov was with us. From all sides columns, under Gurko, Radetski, and Skobelev, the most famous generals of the Russian army, were advancing ; but nobody could say what we really were about to do. Many thought that we were about to enter Constantinople ; others said that the Turks had broken the armistice and had occupied several positions within the Russian lines ; while others again were of opinion that the Turks were spinning out the negotiations under

trifling pretexts, and that we were about to put some pressure on them by pushing forward our outposts beyond the Turkish positions right up to the walls of Constantinople. It was certainly true that the negotiations were made to drag out to a great length, and that with Oriental cunning our enemies always found new reasons to put off a definite signature, in the hope of aid coming from outside. Thus, for example, on the previous day Savfet Pasha had declared his dissent from many points which previously had been finally settled, and had withdrawn his assent from everything he had agreed to, under the pretext that he had had such a headache that he did not know what he was doing. In short, the most various rumours filled the air.

It is a well-known historical fact that on this morning the Grand-Duke Nicholas could easily have occupied Buyukdere on the Bosphorus, and so have closed that channel to the English war-ships and had Constantinople at his mercy. He also knew that the Emperor desired this, but he was wanting in resolution. A few hours more and it was too late, for the English ships had approached so near that they could have reached the Bosphorus before the Russians, and would have been thus in a position to force an entry into the Black Sea. This want of resolution

on the part of the Grand-Duke deprived Russia of all the fruits of the war. She was not in a position, in spite of the enormous army she had concentrated in the Balkan Peninsula, to wage a second war, in which the English and Turkish fleets in the Black Sea, and Austria and Roumania, which in the meantime had turned against her, in the north, could cut off her communications with home. The Balkan Peninsula alone could not feed the Russian army for even a few days, and so Russia had to agree to the shameful treaty of Berlin. Seldom has irresolution in a leader been so immediately and apparently punished.

To return to our movements. Naturally the above considerations did not come into our heads, although many said openly that we ought to occupy Buyukdere ; but at last we got an idea of what was going to be done when we learned that a Russian plenipotentiary had been sent forward to request Mukhtar Pasha, the commander-in-chief of the troops at Constantinople, to evacuate his fortified position at once, as otherwise we should attempt to take it by storm and occupy Constantinople. After waiting for hours, during which the men cooked, at 7.30 A.M. we began our advance, and soon, on reaching a height, saw Constantinople with its numberless minarets and its golden cupolas and half-moons

glittering in the bright sunshine before us. The impression which this made upon the troops was indescribable, and can only be explained by the tradition which has always been handed down among the Russian people that one day "Tsargrad" will belong to the Russian Empire, and that Russian worship will be celebrated in the Hagia Sofia. All crossed themselves, some of them fell upon their knees, and others embraced and kissed their comrades, so that one was reminded of the history of the crusades when the pilgrims for the first time came in sight of Jerusalem. I remember well when the Prussian troops first caught sight of Paris. The enthusiasm then shown was a purely martial one; the breast of every soldier swelled with pride at standing, after sanguinary battles, on the same ground which his forefathers after years of oppression had finally conquered, and through the ranks passed the first glad idea of a newly-founded German empire. Here, however, the enthusiasm was more religious than military, and was expressed more in religious forms. Why was this feeling allowed to uselessly evaporate? Thousands of those who enthusiastically greeted the Turkish crescent with the Christian sign of the cross now lie before the walls of Constantinople, not laid low by the sword of the infidel, but by the frightful

scourge which in a few months was to decimate the Russian army.

We halted about 2000 paces from the frowning Turkish fortifications, and remained for several hours lying down in the open fields while negotiations were being carried on. Russian officers were constantly seen galloping to the Turkish lines, and *vice versa*. At the railway station of San Stefano we could see a large Turkish encampment with a Pasha's green tent in the centre. Mukhtar Pasha, who at the beginning of the war had defeated the Russians in Asia, and had therefore been given the title of "Ghazi" or The Victorious, refused stoutly to evacuate the redoubts, and as stoutly the Russians insisted on his withdrawal. Gurko and Skobelev concentrated their troops for attack, our possible field of battle lay before us, and the excitement was extreme.

Several hours passed thus, during which time the English ships had come so close up that, as I already mentioned, they could be in the Bosphorus before we could reach Buyukdere, until at last Mukhtar Pasha yielded and promised to begin his retreat, but requested that we should not follow him up at once, as he wished first to remove the guns from the works. This was granted, and soon we saw long files of

guns retiring from the fortifications in the direction of Constantinople. At 5 P.M. we advanced, passed between bodies of Turkish infantry and cavalry, the officers and men of which looked at us with bitter rage in their faces, and occupied the two lines of strongly posted works, thanking God that it had not been necessary to storm them, for even if we had been successful, the losses would have been enormous.

We encamped in front of the works, the officers by companies in the gun portions, and I got out my little box, which contained all necessary materials, and began at once to write down my impressions. This caused universal astonishment, not only at my thinking of writing under such circumstances, but also because I had everything at hand.

The night passed quietly. Our patrols crossed peaceably with those of the Turks, although no man knew what would happen next day. On the morning of the 24th February we waited full of anticipation, and I utilized the time in going with some officers to see the Turkish troops, part of whom were still in our rear. There we found many of our soldiers talking with the Turks as best they could and mutually examining one another's rifles, swords, and cartridges, all in the most friendly manner. Before a Pasha's quarters two Turkish and a Russian soldier were

standing sentry, and were drawing one another's attention to any Turkish or Russian officer who approached, whereupon all three saluted.

In no other war in which I have taken part have I seen such curious relations established between the men of the hostile armies as those between the Russian and the Turkish soldiers. During an action the mutual bitterness was extreme ; when a position was taken the victors never gave quarter, and, especially on the part of the Turks, the most frightful cruelties were often perpetrated. As soon, however, as the excitement of battle had died away and the soldiers of both sides came together, the closest friendship appeared to reign between them. They inspected one another's weapons, exchanged eatables, went walking arm in arm, and apparently all ill-feeling was forgotten. At any rate the Russians were much more friendly with their Turkish enemies than with their Roumanian allies, and the friendship between the "freed" Bulgarians and the Russians was none too close. The former had paid rather dearly for their freedom. At that time I saw a very good caricature in one of the comic papers. A Bulgarian was standing before his burning hut with a Bashi-Bazuk on one side with a blazing torch, while on the other a Cossack was making away with a



sack full of plunder. The enraged Bulgarian was holding up his clenched fists to heaven and calling out, "I should like to see any one else try to come and free me!" This picture was not at all a bad shot at the condition of the unfortunate Bulgarians.

The Turkish soldiers looked very well in brand-new, clean uniforms and new boots, and behaved in a friendly and dignified manner. We went into their horse-lines, where we found all in first-rate order, the horses in good condition, and the saddlery well cared for. I inspected the uniform and equipment of several Turkish soldiers minutely, and opened their tunics and found clean shirts underneath. We heard that they had just been entirely newly equipped in Constantinople. The officers did not please me at all, and appeared to be very uninstructed and careless. It was curious to note how the black soldiers, without exception, kept apart from our men ; among them were many fine, handsome fellows. All the infantrymen carried a large supply of ammunition, the packages of cartridges being stuffed loose into the sash which they wore wound five or six times round the waist. One Turkish battery had remained behind ; it afterwards marched along with our troops, between the battalions, and when the

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guns stuck in the deep mud our grenadiers at once lent a hand to push at them as if they had been their own. After some time the battery branched off on the Constantinople road, and its officers and men several times nodded their thanks to us. We, however, moved on to San Stefano and encamped there. Nobody then dreamed that we should remain in that neighbourhood for six full months, the Turkish capital before us, and should then return to Russia disenchanted and bitterly disappointed.

## CHAPTER XV

### UNDER THE GRAND-DUKE NICHOLAS AT SAN STEFANO

ON entering San Stefano we came, as it were, into another world. Many of us had passed almost a year in the miserable villages of Bulgaria and Rumania or on the ice and snow fields of the Balkans, and now we found ourselves suddenly in a beautifully situated town which offered all European conveniences. San Stefano is one of those numerous places on the shore of the Sea of Marmora where the Europeans living in Constantinople pass the summer, and accordingly it has all the features of a place of seaside resort, an excellent hotel, good houses, and a promenade along the shore. It may seem strange that I mention the hotel first of all, but in so doing I only express our feelings when we first beheld it. When one for months has had one's meals prepared by soldier-cooks of doubtful cleanliness in vessels undoubtedly filthy, when one

has been the possessor of only one plate, which has to be hurriedly washed before each change in the bill of fare, and when one has been confined to a monotonous diet, then one appreciates what a decent dinner is. It was a real delight to see a white tablecloth, clean china plates, good glasses, etc., and even the waiters in their black tail-coats and white ties, a dress I abhor, had a homelike air about them. This one hotel, however, with its exorbitant prices, did not by any means suffice for the hundreds of officers and officials who came to San Stefano, and in a few days inns or booths where one could eat standing sprang up in every quarter of the town.

In a short time our headquarters were crammed with knights of fortune from every corner of the earth, many of whom made large fortunes, while others lost the little they possessed. Those who understood how to attract officers to them in the first few days as regular customers made unheard-of profits. During the campaign the officers of the Guards had had little chance of spending money, and now they made up for lost time. In the first few days of our stay, San Stefano, like all towns in the neighbourhood of Constantinople, was flooded with Turkish paper money, as the Turkish Government, to tide over its deficiency in coin, had

given towns, banks, and even individuals, the right of issuing paper money, and everywhere one saw those highly coloured bits of paper, which naturally were worth about as much as the notorious assignats of the first French Revolution. Soon, however, only Russian gold and silver were in circulation in San Stefano, and paper money was seldom seen, as pay was issued mostly in coin. The Greeks, for whom all things are fair, showed themselves the best hands at money-making, and soon one came to understand how the French word *Grec* has come to mean a cheat. The majority of the Greeks in Constantinople are the scum of the earth. They make profit out of everything, and undertake the dirtiest offices, and the first suspicions in the case of every crime fall, and generally rightly, upon a Greek. If the Turks hate the Greeks and judge the whole nation by its scoundrelly representatives in Constantinople, the feeling is easily understood.

In the meantime the peace negotiations, which Russia tried to hurry on as much as possible on account of the threatening attitude of England and Austria, began at San Stefano. Turkish dignitaries came daily from Constantinople to the Grand-Duke's headquarters to treat with him, or rather with Count Ignatiev, hitherto Russian Ambassador in Constanti-

nople. The prevailing opinion then was that the Turks had been so humbled that any conditions might be imposed upon them, but Ahmed Vefik Pasha, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Reouf Pasha, the War Minister, were opponents hard to get over. Vefik Pasha, the first and last president of the former Turkish Parliament of happy memory, was, what one seldom finds among high Turkish dignitaries, a thoroughly upright man, who only thought of the good of his country without any ulterior views for himself. I chanced to make his acquaintance, and from a conversation I had with him I learned that he, although perfectly conscious of the deficiencies of his own country, had a really glowing hatred of everything European. And from his old-Turkish point of view he was undoubtedly right. What good has Europe ever done to Turkey? With such a determined man to treat with, little would have come of the negotiations had not Reouf Pasha, a more pliant personage and a Circassian by birth, been given him as colleague. His principle was "Promise everything, perform nothing," and this principle was written on the face of the rumoured treaty of San Stefano. The Turkish diplomatists knew well enough that England and Austria would never consent to this treaty, and that they therefore

might sign to anything. The Russians thought otherwise, and there certainly was not a single man in San Stefano who doubted about the treaty being carried into effect. Still the negotiations did not run quite smoothly, and military demonstrations were occasionally resorted to. Thus one day a large portion of the Russian troops before Constantinople was concentrated suddenly at San Stefano "for drill," the result of which was that the whole of the Turkish troops lying opposite were called to arms. Later on, the Turks requested that these "mass drills" might be discontinued. The Turkish plenipotentiaries very cleverly declined to hand over any tangible pledges to the Russians, well knowing that what they once gave they could under no circumstances get back. Thus they absolutely declined immediate payment of a portion of the war indemnity, which probably they really were not in a position to make, and also the surrender of six armour-clad ships. The negotiations were very nearly wrecked on those two points. At Russian headquarters the desire was very great to have the treaty of peace signed on the 3rd March, the day of the accession of the Emperor, and of the abolition of serfdom. The Turks knew this very well, but had not the same desire, and resisted to the last moment,

especially as to the payment of the indemnity and the surrender of the ships. So at last the 3rd of March arrived.

Towards 1 o'clock the whole of the Guard Corps and the line troops quartered in the neighbourhood paraded on a large field near San Stefano, and awaited the arrival of the Grand-Duke. At one moment it was said that the conclusion of peace was to be announced, at another that we were to make a demonstration to put pressure on the Turks ; but at last the peace rumours were confirmed, and by a lady. Countess Ignatiev, the wife of the ambassador, cantered along the front of the troops, followed by a young orderly officer, and now and then stopped to talk to officers she knew. Her words naturally spread like wildfire, and so we learned for certain that peace would be signed that day, although the Turkish plenipotentiaries were putting off its signature from hour to hour. A field altar was now erected in front of the line of troops, and decorated with pictures of saints, holy books, and other articles which had formerly belonged to Suvarov and other Russian leaders, and were therefore of historical importance. These articles had been sent from St. Petersburg on purpose to be used on this day. The most conspicuous was a large picture of



the Holy Virgin, which had always hung in Suvarov's tent in his Turkish wars. Several hours passed in expectation, till at last towards 5 o'clock the Grand-Duke Nicholas was seen approaching on horseback with a large staff, in which were also the plenipotentiaries Savfet and Reouf Pashas, whose calm countenances did not in the least bear traces of the exciting, and for them humiliating, hours they had just passed through. The Grand-Duke, always the idol of the soldiers, and especially of those of the Guard, was received with enthusiastic hurrahs, and returned the troops' greeting with joy beaming in his face. After he had ridden down the line, he assembled all the officers, turned first to those of the Guard, and reminded them that it was nineteen years that day since he had been placed in command of the Guard Corps, thanked everybody for their services, and announced the conclusion of peace. The Turkish plenipotentiaries had retired a few paces. Then the Grand-Duke rode forward quite alone opposite to the centre of the line of troops, took his cap off, crossed himself, raised his gigantic figure high in the saddle, and, in a thundering voice, which was heard by every man in the rearmost ranks, cried out the one word "Mir" (peace). A thundering hurrah from the troops was the answer, caps were

thrown high in the air, and there was no end to the rejoicing. During this storm of enthusiasm the Grand-Duke dismounted, went up to Savfet Pasha, and shook hands with him with emotion. Savfet held out his hand without speaking a word or his manner changing in the least, and made a very low bow, which said more than all words.

Then followed the religious service and—especially solemn at this moment—a mass for the souls of those who had fallen in the war. When the hymn of mourning began all the thousands present, even the Turkish spectators, fell on their knees. It was an impressive sight after all the jubilant enthusiasm. The ceremony was brought to an end by a march past of all the troops before the Grand-Duke, and in the evening all the men were entertained, and San Stefano was splendidly illuminated.

After the apparently great advantages which Russia had obtained by the peace of San Stefano, nobody doubted that we should all soon return home. Rumours, however, soon reached us that England and Austria refused to agree to the treaty of peace concluded between Russia and Turkey, though every one was convinced that Germany would keep these two powers in check. The feeling of friendship for Germany was never, before or since, stronger than

at that moment, the German organization was extolled to heaven as a pattern for all armies, and a close alliance was said to be imminent. This feeling held ground until later the opinions of the Russian newspapers as to the Congress of Berlin were heard, and these soon repressed it. Till then even Prince Bismarck's figure of speech of the "honest broker" had remained in general unheeded. Still the general feeling among officers, and especially among those of the General Staff, was very hopeful. In the brilliant treaty of peace and the conclusion of the war the beginning of the campaign was forgotten, and if Plevna were spoken of, only the final overthrow of Osman Pasha was remembered. The defeats were forgotten. As a matter of fact the Russian army was at that time in the finest condition for fighting, except that its supplies were not assured. The losses had been made good by drafts, an enormous number of troops was on the theatre of war, and sickness had not then made the ravages which it afterwards caused.

We made ourselves as comfortable as possible in San Stefano. There were hardly any duties to be performed, and each tried to enjoy himself as much as he could after the hardships of the war. Officers came from distant places to enjoy themselves in San

Stefano, and the town played the same part as St. Denis, Enghien, and Montmorency during the armistice before Paris. Every afternoon two bands played on the shore, and officers and ladies from Constantinople, many of them of very doubtful reputation, walked up and down listening to their strains. Some of the owners of the villas, mostly rich Greeks, came also from Constantinople with their wives and opened their houses to the officers. Several times a day steamers brought passengers from Constantinople desirous of seeing the life in the Russian headquarters, and soon many of these picked up acquaintance with the Russian Guard officers. Trade and commerce flourished. Constantinople was as yet closed to the Russians, so numerous tradesmen came to San Stefano and erected extempore shops with a few boards and chairs, in which all sorts of goods were offered for sale, such as carpets, sewed table-covers or cushion-covers, Turkish ladies' embroidered velvet jackets with corresponding transparent muslin chemises, silk cloth, pipes and pipe-sticks, books in all languages, pictures and photographs of the neighbourhood, provisions, fruit, and sweetmeats. All these were offered for sale in the most various languages, English, French, German, Turkish, and

Italian, and soon the shopkeepers learned even Russian expressions. The prices were naturally preposterously high, but those who understood how to bargain could generally get them cheap enough. What a varied assortment of things was sent back to Russia from San Stefano!

The officers of headquarters, and especially those most closely connected with the Grand-Duke, naturally played the leading part at San Stefano. The Grand-Duke Nicholas Nicholayevich, whose outward appearance was very like that of his Imperial father, was also like him in his military instincts. He was a good peace general, and, as already mentioned, was much liked by his officers and men, but had been educated in the traditions of the Guard in St. Petersburg, which he, as well as the Emperor Nicholas I., considered as the essence of all military virtues. The example of the Prussians in 1866 and 1870-71, and the successes which Crown-Prince Frederick William and Prince Frederick Charles had won, and by which they had added new *éclat* to their royal house, had induced the Emperor Alexander II. to entrust the command of the armies in Europe and in Asia to his two brothers. In the case of the Grand-Duke Nicholas, however, these were not the only reasons why he

should be placed in the important position of commander-in-chief in the European theatre of war. As in the case of Benedek in 1866, so also in this war the Emperor yielded to the voice of the army and of public opinion in the country, which unanimously demanded the Grand-Duke as leader of the forces. He was full of the best intentions and of confidence in himself, but his whole military training was not such as to qualify him for the position, and he was in a certain measure a sacrifice to his training.

The choice of a chief of the staff and his assistant was none too happily made. Generals Nepokoichitski, A.D.C., and Levitski were both Poles and Roman Catholics. Far be it from me to in the least impugn the character and honour of those two men, who are now both in their graves. Both tried to do their duty for the best interests of their Emperor and of Russia as much as any born Russian could have done, but their origin and their religion gave a wide field of attack for evil tongues—and such are not wanting in Russia. Especially active in this respect were many who never set foot on the theatre of war, but who, after the first defeats of the army, talked big in the *salons* of St. Petersburg and Moscow in order to impress on the simple their love of country, bravery,

and experience of war, all only existing in their own imagination. An army of scribes placed their pens at the disposal of these theoreticians, and while streams of blood were flowing in the theatre of war these poured out streams of ink. There have at all times been such unwarlike talkers, and even the old Romans knew them. L. Æmilius Paulus mocked them to good effect before he set out on his campaign in Macedonia against Perscus, and invited them to accompany him into the field. But Æmilius Paulus was luckier than General Nepokoichitski. The latter, an old man, and older than his years, had never had an opportunity of directing large bodies of troops. He therefore had not the necessary grasp of the subject, and, instead of seeing to things himself, he depended entirely on the reports of his subordinates. The soul of the whole was General Levitski, but his actions in particular were most sharply attacked in Russian military circles, especially by General Kuropatkin, Skobelev's former chief of the staff, whose works have been translated into German. Later on, in public lectures, which were always attended by many of the Grand-Dukes, and which were much commented upon by the newspapers, General Kuropatkin condemned unsparingly the conduct

of staff duties at headquarters during the campaign. General Levitski had passed his whole career in the Guard Corps without ever having had a chance of learning what the army or war was, and like General Nepokoichitski he had occupied several positions on the staff of the Grand-Duke, who was very intimate with both generals. Besides these there were at headquarters a large number of generals without any definite duties, General Staff officers, and a whole army of orderly officers. The latter, who all belonged to Guard cavalry regiments, gained numerous orders with a very small expenditure of danger or trouble, and always appeared in the newest of clothes, whence their nickname among the soldiers of "pheasants." Vereshchagin has represented one of those young officers in one of his pictures. He is coming in the most immaculate of new uniforms, his breast covered with orders, from dinner at headquarters. An officer of the line in a war-worn uniform forms the contrast, and the inscription on the picture is, *Si jeune et si bien décoré!* It is characteristic of the style of thing.

The headquarter staff was not composed, as it should have been, of selected good men, General Staff officers distinguished for their attainments,



experience of war, or power of work, conscientious and careful adjutants, and dashing horsemen as orderly officers. The Grand-Duke's *entourage* in St. Petersburg, with all its hangers-on, was simply transplanted from the capital to the theatre of war. At first the war was not taken seriously, and the enemy was despised, and later on, when the situation became dangerous, there was a great want of presence of mind.

To headquarters belonged also the civil officials of the former principality of Bulgaria under Prince Cherkasski. This individual, one of the warmest advocates of the abolition of serfdom, one of the heads of the Pan-Slavonic party, and therefore one of those who urged on this war, died exactly on the 3rd March, the day of the conclusion of peace and the anniversary of the abolition of serfdom, which, as it was carried out too suddenly, did not have the expected good results on the economic condition of Russia. A large number of persons of shady reputation belonged to this civil branch, especially officers who could no longer remain with their regiments. This was a great mistake, as later on the Russian civil administration made itself hated among the Bulgarians by many unsavoury transactions, and contributed along with other causes to the extinction of

that liking which a great proportion of the Bulgarian population entertained at first for Russia. The intendance officials were entirely in the hands of the notorious Supply Company, which has the ruin of many formerly honest men on its conscience. The legal proceedings afterwards taken show this only too clearly.

Naturally a crowd of newspaper correspondents from all countries found their way to San Stefano, among whom the English, and especially the French, made themselves conspicuous by their insolent and pushing demeanour. Among the Frenchmen there was a certain L., who had the impertinence to have on his visiting cards "*Volontaire au 26ième des Cosaques*," because he had accompanied this regiment during a portion of the campaign ; later on he published his recollections under the above title, dedicated to the Grand-Duke, and these absolutely swarm with exaggerations and inaccuracies. Mr. L. forced himself in the most shameless way upon the society of officers, invited himself to dinner, and then related how this or that regiment had given a festival in his honour ; he called officers who were hardly known to him by their nicknames, in consequence of which he frequently had to swallow meekly the greatest insults, and, in short, was in all respects a most

despicable creature. Another Frenchman, who was to be seen every day at headquarters, called himself a correspondent, but in reality was an agent of the Supply Company. His story was that he had been a French officer and aide-de-camp to Bazaine during the Franco-German War, for which he had received the legion of honour. I had often heard that he was on the best of terms with headquarters and with the officers. It was only later on that I made his acquaintance, and soon turned the conversation on to the battle of St. Privat, for which he said that he had received the legion of honour. When he found that I also had taken part in that battle, he became very cautious in what he said, which all the more caused me to go thoroughly into certain matters, from which it appeared that he had no idea of what had gone on there, and therefore could certainly not have been aide-de-camp to Bazaine or received the legion of honour for that battle. As this conversation took place before a great many witnesses, and the report of it was soon spread abroad, he eventually thought it best to disappear from headquarters. The English reporters were mostly with Skobelev, who entertained them royally, and had to thank them for a good deal of his European reputation. In general, reporters were

very well treated at headquarters. They were under Colonel Hasenkampf of the General Staff, from whom they received all news at first hand; they were given all sorts of privileges, and at the end of the war they all received Russian orders.

Among the foreign officers who remained at headquarters in San Stefano, Major von Lignitz of the Prussian General Staff certainly played the leading part, and was much liked and respected by the Grand-Duke and the officers, especially those of the General Staff. Majors Count von Wedel and von Villaume were also very popular. The Austrian Captains Baron Löhneisen and Bolla had also at first a very good position, but afterwards, when the relations with Austria became strained, they were more coldly treated, and their situation became uncomfortable, the Grand-Duke especially behaving to them with great reserve, and they soon left the army.

At that time, in the middle of March, we already began to believe that war would break out against England and Austria, and it was even reported that the Guards, instead of being sent back to their garrisons as had been hoped, were to be transported to Kiev to form part of a large army to be collected against Austria. A few days later we were told

that a declaration of war by England might be expected any day, and her ships always remained in threatening proximity opposite the Prince's Islands.

We had now been four weeks idle before Constantinople, and this inactivity began to show its evil effects. The abrupt change was not good for officers and men who for months had suffered such great hardships and privations. Nothing was done the whole day except an hour or an hour and a half's drill. It will be easily understood that, under such circumstances, the strict discipline of the men fell off in an alarming manner, and the most unheard-of excesses were committed both against their superior officers and the inhabitants. As long as the Grand-Duke remained in command no notice was taken of this from above. Drunkenness especially got the upper hand of the men, and drink shops and so-called "Tingel-tangels" sprang up like mushrooms all over the place, their keepers being mostly, I am ashamed to confess, Germans. In Constantinople there are numbers of disreputable Germans of both sexes who do little honour to their country, and now San Stefano offered a fair field for the operations of these people.

Every night mixed patrols of Russian soldiers

and Turkish gendarmes paraded the streets and brought loafers and drunken people of both sexes to the main guard for punishment, but this measure was of little effect. Corporal punishment was often inflicted on the men ; in peace only soldiers who have been degraded to the second class can be so punished, but in war it is applicable to all soldiers with the exception of possessors of the St. George's cross. Punishments up to a hundred lashes were by no means rare. Some men bore this frightful punishment very well, while others had immediately afterwards to be taken to hospital. No one who has not attended the infliction of such a punishment can form any idea of the terrible impression made on the spectators.

The first one I attended will never be erased from my memory, all the more so as the proof of the crime was not perfect, and I was convinced that an innocent man was being punished. A Guardsman had one evening, in a badly-lighted wine shop, refused to obey a surgeon, and, when the latter tried to arrest him, had forced his way out, tearing off one of the surgeon's shoulder straps. Suspicion fell on a certain man, but the case was doubtful, and the accused, a well-behaved man, stoutly denied the crime. The battalion commander, however, was

convinced of the man's guilt and ordered his company commander to inflict a hundred lashes on him before the whole company. The unfortunate man, who kept constantly calling God to witness his innocence and crossing himself, was stripped and laid on a spread-out greatcoat; one under-officer held his head and another his feet, while two others stood one on each side and flogged him with rods which were changed after every tenth stroke. The under-officer on duty kept count, counting slowly, on the express order of the captain. After the tenth stroke great red weals showed themselves, and after the fortieth at every blow the blood spirted high into the air; the wretched man shrieked loudly and begged for mercy. I implored the captain to remit some of the punishment, but on the contrary he got into a greater rage every moment that "such a thing should have happened in his company." After about the seventieth blow the unfortunate man was silent, and remained unconscious to the end, when the surgeon on duty, who was in attendance, had to use strong restoratives to bring him round. His back looked like a lump of raw meat. To the furious question of his captain, "Now, you ——, will you remember your punishment?" the man crossed himself and replied, "As

sure as God exists, I am innocent." He had to remain six weeks in hospital before he was cured.

When, as was the case at San Stefano, a large number of men are crowded together in a comparatively small space, the most merciless strictness is necessary to preserve order and cleanliness. This had been neglected, and the consequences were not long in showing themselves. The remains of slaughtered cattle and other food were not buried deep enough, and in other matters sufficient care was not taken in disinfection, so that the air became day by day more poisonous. In the middle of March the preliminary symptoms of a typhus epidemic showed themselves, which gained ground slowly, but all the more surely. Even then the hospitals were overflowing, and regiments had to establish auxiliary hospitals. There was a great want of medical personnel, but all this was child's play to what was to come, and even at that time every company had twenty to twenty-five men down with typhus.

The officers, who suffered from their unrestrained manner of living, and their continued intercourse with strangers from Constantinople, often caused all sorts of unpleasant disturbances. In San Stefano a so-called "café-concert" had been established, in



which a company of German vocalists and some French ex-opera-singers gave performances. The tone obtaining there was by no means high-class, and brutal excesses, which in Germany would hardly be imagined, were of frequent occurrence.

At last, after the Grand-Duke Nicholas had paid his respects to the Sultan, permission was given for officers to visit Constantinople. All who could make use of this permission did so, and many officers lived more in Constantinople than with their regiments. At first these visits were only permitted in plain clothes, then all leave to visit the capital was refused, and later on again leave was even given to visit it in uniform. I do not intend here to give a description of Constantinople, which would be going beyond the limits of this work, and shall therefore only make mention of the life in the capital in so far as it had to do with the presence of the Russian army.

As, naturally, no officer had brought plain clothes with him on service, there was at first great scarcity of them, till at last Greck tradesmen set up old-clothes shops in San Stefano, where garments, often of the most impossible cut, were offered for sale. One might easily have believed oneself transported to the Mühhlendamm, only that the Greek traders were more importunate in offering their

wares than their Jewish counterparts in Berlin. The moment you had got rid of a man on the right who desired to make you the happy possessor of a coat and waistcoat, you were certain to be met on the left by a pair of trousers held up before your face. Every day officers used the railway into Constantinople.

The company to which I belonged had to furnish the guard over the railway station at San Stefano, where there was a most lively traffic. In it one came upon many reminiscences of Germany, among them the picture of the late Prussian General von Mutius, once well known as the commander of the 6th Army Corps in Breslau. Nobody could give me any information as to how it got there, and probably to this day it still remains as lost property in the station. This reminds me of another picture I saw. I was quartered close to the station, and my host, a high official, was an Austrian named Kutlich, a relation of a democrat well known in 1848. He appeared to have adopted the political opinions of his cousin, and aired his democratic ideas a good deal before the Russian officers, being especially loud in his denunciations of all men in whose veins princely blood flowed. Every one was very much amused with him, all the more so as in

everything that he said he exaggerated, or to speak more truly, lied so roundly that I have never met his equal. One day I heard a lively conversation going on in Mr. Kutlich's office, and found him there pointing to a small photograph on his writing table, which, he asserted, was that of his cousin, a general in the Austrian service. The officers would not believe this, and on looking more closely I recognised in Mr. Kutlich's cousin a very good picture of—Prince Frederick Charles of Prussia in Hussar uniform, with the ribbon of the Order of the Black Eagle! A roar of laughter followed my declaration, which Mr. Kutlich at first asserted to be untrue, but afterwards he said that the picture belonged to his wife, and that he had always believed that it was that of her cousin. Whenever, afterwards, he began to rail at princes we brought up that picture, and gradually he gave up his democratic rhetoric. As the newspapers reported, Mr. Kutlich afterwards played a conspicuous part in the surprise of a train by the bandit Athanas, in so far as he it was who succeeded in escaping, clothed only in his drawers, and bringing the news to the nearest station.

At first the officers always went in parties to Constantinople, and kept together when there, as the

temper of the populace was uncertain. But there was nothing to fear from them. After the heroic enthusiasm which possessed the Turkish people during the war had failed to ward off disaster, a profound indifference seemed to have settled down on the Turkish inhabitants of Constantinople. Only in Stambul, the purely Turkish quarter, did one occasionally see lowering faces and clenched fists, but there the Russian officers seldom showed themselves, keeping rather to Pera, the more European quarter of the city. In spite of plain clothes and the inevitable fez, the officers were at once recognised, and this was the main reason why afterwards uniform was allowed to be worn. Everywhere in passing one heard the word "Moskov," but soon this ceased, and the Turks accustomed themselves to the appearance of the Russians. Especially pitiable was the lot of the fugitives, whom one saw by thousands on the streets, carrying with them the little property they had saved. As many as possible of them were accommodated in the mosques, but even these were insufficient. Soon the typhus committed fearful ravages among those wretched beings, and one saw heart-rending scenes. I remember seeing a girl of eleven or twelve years of age cowering down in a corner of the street apart

from the others, and covering with the few rags left her her little brother of seven years of age, who was sound asleep with his head on her breast. The father and mother of the children had been murdered by the Bashi-Bazuks, and they were now alone in the world. The misery among those unfortunates was terrible, and the Turkish Government did far too little to help them. The fugitives bore their sad lot with real Oriental equanimity. The regular beggars of the capital, however, would not leave us alone until they received alms, and often held on to our clothes and refused to let go. Their chief happy hunting-ground was the great bridge over the Golden Horn.

The principal rendezvous of the Russian officers were the large European hotels in the Grande Rue de Pera, especially the Hotel de Pesth. When we were dining there for the first time we were surprised at hearing several Turkish pashas, officers, and officials at the next table talking German. These were Grünwald and Strecker Pashas and several other Germans who had entered the Turkish service. I was very hospitably received later on by Strecker Pasha in his house at Makrikioi, a collection of villas not far from Constantinople. He was married to an Englishwoman of good family, and

nobody would recognise in the courtly man of the world, with a wonderful knowledge of languages, the former sergeant-major of the Prussian Guard Artillery. After the Congress of Berlin he became, as is well known, commander of the East Rumelian Militia. In this hotel we also met the Russian officers who had been taken prisoners at Elena, among them also Colonel von Klevesahl, a regimental commander, who was falsely reported to have been killed. Their joy at seeing Russian officers again may be imagined. They had been well treated in Constantinople, and had enjoyed every liberty, except that they were not allowed to carry arms.

Most officers naturally employed their time in Constantinople in seeing the sights of the town, but there were many who saw nothing at all of them, and only visited Constantinople to enjoy themselves and get rid of the money they had saved during the campaign, which they easily succeeded in doing. There was no need to take much trouble, for Greek procurers and cheats did all that was necessary. Every evening large numbers of Russian officers assembled in the *Café Concordia* in the *Grande Rue de Pera*, one of the most dissolute places it has ever been my lot to see. In the lower rooms

singers of *chansonnettes* gave performances, and upstairs were large gambling saloons in which the gold rolled on the green table. Gambling was certainly forbidden by the Turkish police, but the proprietors did not spare money in bribes, and the Turkish officials never entered these rooms. Alongside were other rooms in which the actresses, singers, and dancers of the Concordia Theatre were to be found, and around them were boxes which could be closed. The orgies celebrated there defy all description, and compared with this place the Orpheum at Berlin was a temple of all the virtues. A visit to Constantinople was still not quite without danger for a man by himself, and cases, though few, occurred in which officers and officials disappeared without leaving a trace, and were never seen or heard of again. They had certainly been sacrificed to cupidity or jealousy, the latter a matter which the Turks regard as not one for joking. Constantinople must have made large sums out of its Russian visitors, and it certainly would have been better for the fair fame of the Russian army if visits to it in uniform had not been permitted.

In Constantinople I had the privilege of making the acquaintance of Mehemed Ali Pasha, a born Prussian from Magdeburg, whose real name was

Detroit, and who had entered the Turkish service very young. He soon reached the highest rank, and was undoubtedly the most capable Turkish general in the late war. With his small army he held the Tsarevich in check in front of the Quadrilateral and on the Lom, and if his advice had been followed the war would probably have taken quite another course. Still as a Christian he was not trusted, and the Council of War in Constantinople, and especially the incapable commander at the Shipka Pass, Suleiman Pasha, worked so successfully against Mehemed Ali that he was deprived of his command. A year after the war he was sent without troops against the insurgent Arnauts, where he and all who accompanied him met with a heroic but terrible death. Shut up in a little house, he tried to cut his way through the insurgents, but fell dead pierced by twenty-one dagger wounds. No one doubted that the Christian Pasha had been sent there so as to get rid of him in an easy manner.

As soon as I heard of his presence in Constantinople I asked for permission to call upon him, and received by return the following answer : "*Mehemed Ali Pascha sera enchanté de faire la connaissance de Mr. le comte Pfeil, le priant de venir le voir un de ces jours avant-midi.—Une bonne poignée de main*



de compatriote." The Pasha lived in Constantinople, near the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Sublime Porte, in his own beautifully furnished house. The servants, many of them negroes, had been prepared for my arrival, and took me at once into Mehemed Ali's reception-room, where I found him in conversation with several Turkish officers of high rank, who on my arrival at once took their departure. His sitting-room was quite European, comfortably furnished, and adorned with large pictures of the Emperor William and the Crown-Prince. The only thing which was not quite in keeping was the Turkish servant, who continually came in with all slavish forms of respect to see whether I had not finished my boiling hot cup of Turkish coffee. Soon Mehemed Ali began to speak of the war, and was very bitter on the subject of the bad conduct of it, while also showing himself to be filled with glowing hatred of the Russians. He complained much of the numerous intrigues carried on in Constantinople, which had interfered even with the conduct of operations. Thus he had been nominated commander of the army for the relief of Plevna, but eighteen hours afterwards the order was cancelled. Thereafter, he actually received the order at a time when he had prepared everything in his own army

for a successful attack against the Tsarevich. His successor there did not carry out his plans. For the relief of Plevna he was given such wretched, untrained troops that success was impossible. Later on, after the Russians had crossed the Balkans, he had been for thirty-six hours commander of all the troops in Rumelia, with the easily executed order to defend Adrianople, which was strongly fortified, to the last man. He at once set out for that place, but arrived there only to find that he had been superseded, and that Adrianople, which would have held out for months, was to be surrendered without striking a blow. "Such miserable proceedings are only possible here with us," he said in conclusion. He spoke with great anger of Suleiman Pasha, who, after in his youth occupying a very doubtful position in the family of an old Pasha, had on the recommendation of the latter been appointed "Major and teacher of literature" in a school. Thereafter he had been made a general and, finally, commander of an army. Turkey has him to thank for her ruin. In a long discourse he pointed out all the mistakes made by Suleiman Pasha, especially his mad attempts to storm the Russian position on the Shipka, and finished by saying, "What, however, can be expected from a man who was first a —— and then a teacher

of literature? The scoundrel has not even common courage." He then spoke of the Turkish army in general, and praised highly its men and their personal courage, but had a very low opinion of the officers, and ended by saying, "If we could only make up our minds to engage a large number of Prussian officers!"

We were often interrupted by the entrance of officers, and afterwards his aide-de-camp, Suchodolski, a Pole, whose brother was aide-de-camp to Skobelev, also arrived. After he came in, our conversation, which had hitherto been in German, was carried on in French, and was principally on political subjects. He considered the English policy *lâche et stupide*, and had no belief in a war between England and Russia. "Russia would have acted more wisely and more honourably if she had made less exorbitant demands, and only asked for a Bulgaria as far as the Balkans." The Russian demands in this matter were opposed vehemently later on by Mehemed Ali as a member of the Congress of Berlin, and his opinion has certainly had a good deal to do with making Bulgaria what it now is. He became much excited when he talked about Russia, and said, "And yet Russia fears Turkey still; therefore she has seized the present opportunity of putting her foot

down on her neck. I hope and believe, however, that Turkey will learn much from her defeats, and will organize her army in such a manner as to make the best of her splendid supply of men. Then it would not be impossible that Turkish troops, combined with Poles"—pointing to Suchodolski—"might one day appear before the gates of Moscow." On leaving, he presented me with his photograph with a very friendly inscription on it. Although I naturally did not believe in this picture of the future drawn by the former Turkish commander-in-chief, my conversation with this, at that time, most renowned personage was still very interesting.

In and round Constantinople the Turkish soldiers were drilled with great assiduity, a custom which we imitated later on. Every day one could see battalions or larger bodies drilling or at musketry or field training, and all these were carried out in excellent style. That the Turks only considered the treaty of San Stefano as a production of pens and ink became more and more apparent, and they were diligently preparing themselves to take an energetic part in an Anglo-Austrian campaign against Russia. Osman Pasha, the hero of Plevna, had returned from captivity; he was received by the Sultan and the army in Constantinople with the

greatest honour, and soon was the life and soul of the war party. Towards the end of April we were surprised by seeing powerful and connected fortified works rising gradually in front of Constantinople at 2000 paces from our position. The Grand-Duke, basing himself upon the treaty of peace, tried hard to put a stop to this intrenching, but his representations were met by all sorts of pretexts on the part of the Turks, and remained of no effect. According to all the intelligence we received, an army of from 180,000 to 200,000 men was at that time collected round the capital, and an occupation of Constantinople or the capture of the positions commanding the Bosphorus, and therefore the entrance to the Black Sea, had long since become an impossibility for us. The Black Sea was open to the Anglo-Turkish fleet, which thus, in the event of war, was in a position easily to cut off our communications with home.

Meanwhile typhus and fever had made terrible ravages in the ranks of the Russian army. Hundreds of men in every regiment reported themselves sick daily, and though often only a dose of quinine was necessary to put a stop to the fever, still this disease, even in a mild form, weakened the men considerably. On the top of all this came the time of fasting, which, from religious motives, it was

desirable to observe, and so for a whole week the men got nothing but fish to eat at the very time when a nourishing meat diet was more than ever necessary. An alarming increase of typhus was the natural consequence, and that in a most aggravated form. The faces of many hitherto perfectly healthy men became suddenly a greenish-white, high fever and vomiting set in, and often death followed in a few hours. In many cases the sickness lasted longer, but the disease was still exceptionally virulent. A third of each regiment at least was in hospital, and there were so many dead that each regiment formed its own cemetery. At the end of August there were eighty-four surgeons in San Stefano, and of these within a few days nineteen fell sick or died, and the number of hospital assistants became totally insufficient, so great had been the mortality among them. On the 25th April eighty selected soldiers were detailed as hospital attendants in San Stefano and its immediate neighbourhood, and of these, eight days after, no fewer than sixty-eight were down with typhus. The unfavourable weather had much to do with the high sick rate, for cold and even snowstorms alternated with great heat. The main blame, however, rests on the shoulders of the authorities. I have already mentioned the

numerous booths in which spirits and provisions of inferior quality were sold, the uncleanliness of the streets, the insufficient care in the burying of offal, and other matters. The greatest disorder reigned at the railway station of San Stefano. Every day men arrived there in large numbers who had either been discharged, often only half-cured, from the hospitals situated farther to the rear, or who were to be sent home from the front. No preparations were, however, made for their reception, and the unfortunate men lay all about the station, exposed to wind and weather, on the damp ground, and deep in mud. It was a sorrowful sight. There was an absolute want of trained personnel for the lines of communication, and it was only later on that ten station commandants for the whole theatre of war were sent from Russia.

Thus gradually Easter arrived, and every day there were several services held in the Greek Church at San Stefano, as strict orders were issued that all officers should partake of the Holy Communion. The Protestant officers and men were also given an opportunity of attending this sacrament, there being, as I have already mentioned, a Protestant chaplain at headquarters, Pastor Loesch. A large basement room was fitted up as a church, and in it twenty-five

officers and forty soldiers partook of the Holy Communion. This sacrament, so far from home and on the eve, as we believed, of a threatened war, made a deep impression on all who were present. A German religious service, before the gates of the Turkish capital, and in the Russian headquarters!



## CHAPTER XVI

### UNDER THE COMMAND OF GENERAL VON TOTLEBEN

EASTER was, however, to bring an important change for us, for in view of the war with England, which appeared every day more probable, the Emperor Alexander determined to appoint the hero of Sevastopol and the captor of Plevna, General von Totleben, to be commander-in-chief of all the forces in Turkey. The choice was an excellent one, as the sequel showed. It was a heavy blow for the Grand-Duke Nicholas to have to leave the army which he certainly had led victorious to the gates of Constantinople, and which he had now to hand over to a general previously serving under him. His removal when a war was pending was rendered all the more painful to the Grand-Duke, as with him all his headquarter staff was recalled, a most distinct sign of the Imperial displeasure. All the officers and men, who, as has been often

mentioned, were much attached to the Grand-Duke in spite of the early misfortunes of the war, felt much for him in his painful position, although each owned that no better qualified commander-in-chief than General von Totleben could have been found.

The transfer of command was to take place on Easter eve, immediately after the conclusion of the service, and it may be imagined that we looked forward with anticipation to this event, as it was known that both the old and the new commander-in-chief would be present at it.

At 11 o'clock at night the service began in the Greek Church, in which all the generals and a large number of officers had assembled. All the notabilities of the campaign were there: General Radetski, the hero of the Shipka, who for months had held out along with his soldiers in the most severe cold on the ice-bound crest of the Balkans; General Gurko, who was the first to cross the Balkans at the beginning of the war, and who, forced to retrace his steps 'across the mountains, had later on led the Guards across them to victory; the youthful General Skobelev, whose name was in the mouths of all; Prince Sviatopolk-Mirski, the victor in the last decisive battle of Shipka; Prince Imere-tinski, the victor of Lovcha, now chief of the staff

to the new commander-in-chief, and a host of other less renowned but still well-known officers.

Shortly before 11 General von Tottleben entered with his head held high and full of joyous confidence. All pressed forward to worship the rising sun, but the General received their congratulations very calmly, for he knew that among them were many who hated him in their hearts because he was a German. Punctually at 11 o'clock the Grand-Duke entered the church, followed by the whole of his headquarter staff. What a difference between this day and that when he, rejoicing in his victories, had announced to his enthusiastic and joyful army the conclusion of peace! General von Tottleben had, immediately before the ceremony, announced to him in the name of the Emperor his promotion to field-marshal, and the badges of the highest military rank adorned his epaulettes. Erect, and towering by a head over all others, he passed through the ranks of the officers, acknowledging their salutes by a slight inclination of the head. The priest handed him the cross to kiss, and the service began. What must have been the thoughts of the Grand-Duke during it! For the last time the flag, which had accompanied him as commander-in-chief in all actions and at all ceremonies, was

borne behind him by an under-officer of Cossacks covered with medals ; for the last time he exercised command over the officers and troops gathered here in the dead of night ; for the last time the prayer for the commander-in-chief, which follows immediately after that for the Emperor, was a prayer for him ! He knew that the assembled crowd would soon be paying their respects to his successor, who was standing behind him, and that he would be a fallen star.

The situation was well characterized by the action of a person quite unimportant in himself, a well-fed chamberlain covered with all sorts of peace orders, who, I know not why, was at this time at headquarters. When, at the conclusion of the service, the Grand-Duke retired through the lane which was opened through the crowd of spectators, this carpet knight made such a deep reverence before him with such a look of pain and sympathy that the Grand-Duke, touched by the act, stopped for a moment and shook hands with him. Hardly was the Grand-Duke past when the expression of the courtier changed to greet the rising sun, and, as General Totleben passed, he advanced with an actually beaming face, holding out both hands to congratulate him. The General had, however, a better

occupation for his hands and only nodded coldly to him.

A few days after Easter, on the 29th April, there was a great review of the troops at San Stefano before the Grand-Duke, in which he took leave of them. When he left San Stefano by steamer the shore was covered with innumerable men, who waved their caps and cheered their late commander-in-chief as a farewell. Before his departure he had managed to arrange that the officers of the Guard Corps should receive the orders which had been awarded them. In this, as in all matters, the Guards were much favoured, and, although the corps had only arrived in the theatre of war in August, and had taken part in far fewer actions than the troops of the line, almost every officer received two or three orders, while in the line, even in regiments which had greatly distinguished themselves, an officer with even two orders was a very rare sight. The men were treated in the same way. It will be easily understood that this caused much bad blood in the line.

With the departure of the Grand-Duke Nicholas and the appointment of General von Tottleben as commander-in-chief, a new era began in the sojourn of the Russian army before Constantinople. The

time which had passed may be designated as the period of idleness, that which now began as the season of activity, as will be seen from the sequel.

One of General Totleben's first measures was to carry out a more rational distribution of the troops. While hitherto the whole army had been crowded in and around San Stefano, Totleben only left in this town a battalion to furnish guards, and distributed the rest of the army, which had been augmented to three army corps, along a long line from San Stefano to the Black Sea. As in Constantinople the war party had now got the upper hand, and the Turks were every day strengthening their fortifications and occupying them with large bodies of troops, General Totleben advanced the Russian troops nearer to the line of demarcation. The main body encamped upon the chain of heights along that line, on fresh ground and in good air, and secured themselves by regular outposts as in war. Our line of sentries was so close to that of the Turks that the men could shake hands. The position of the main body was strongly fortified. In addition to the labour involved in throwing up these works and in carrying on the outpost duties, other means were taken to bring the troops into training again after their long period of idleness. General Totleben had worked

out a whole network of roads to connect the troops in front with those in rear, and the extremely careful construction of these, which would be so important in the event of war, occupied thousands of officers and men daily. Drill was also carried out more diligently than heretofore, and a regular course of musketry was instituted.

The number of field hospitals was greatly increased, and most of them were moved farther back; strict measures were also taken for the maintenance of order and cleanliness. Immediately after General von Tottleben's arrival every one felt that a real general, whose eye was upon everything, was now at our head. He saw to everything himself, and could make himself very unpleasant when things were not properly done. One example among many will show this. While the Grand-Duke was at San Stefano numerous supplies of provisions had been piled up close to the shore, about three months' supply for an army of three army corps. Of these naturally a large proportion became spoiled or disappeared from various causes, but, apart from that, it seemed absolutely incomprehensible how this spot should have been selected for the formation of such a magazine, for in the event of a war against England and Turkey, such as might then have broken

out any day, all those supplies would have at once been destroyed by the Turkish heavy batteries and the English fleet. It is not too much to say that this would have been equivalent to the ruin of the army. General von Tottleben, in spite of the difficulties raised by the intendance and the railway authorities, ordered those supplies to be at once removed to Chataldja and Adrianople, and this, although trains were despatched night and day, took four weeks to effect.

The troops made themselves as comfortable as might be in their camps. To afford protection as far as possible against the heat, holes several feet deep were dug in the ground, and over these the tents were pitched. In May and the beginning of June this measure was of some use, but later on the heat became so great that all means were in vain. Officers and men were clothed as lightly as possible in white linen blouses and trousers, and the back of the head was protected by a cloth fastened to the border of the cap and falling on the shoulders, but in spite of those precautions cases of sunstroke were not infrequent.

The life of the officers became much more regular, as the amount of duty to be done made frequent visits to Constantinople impossible. They messed



together by battalions or regiments, and their fare was tolerably plain. In each unit there were generally a few men more or less initiated in the mysteries of the culinary art and able to prepare simple dishes, and in addition almost every regiment had got a messman from Constantinople who provided all sorts of extras at fairly low prices in a large tent comfortably fitted up for about forty persons. When not on duty in the morning and evening, the officers passed most of the day in their tents, on account of the great heat, and these they had fitted up as comfortably as they could. In the evenings officers and men took part in all sorts of games, such as are usual in German schools. Every evening, on darkness coming on, groups of officers gathered together to sing songs, among which German ones were of not infrequent occurrence. At 9 P.M. the evening prayer was said in our camp and also in that of the Turks opposite. It always made a peculiar impression to hear the shouts of Allah from the hostile camp, at the moment our men took off their caps in prayer.

The numerous snakes, often of great length, which infested the neighbourhood were a great plague to us. Some were poisonous and some were not, but the difference, when one encountered one of these

reptiles, was difficult to make out. I was seated one evening in my tent, deep in a good book, when I suddenly heard a rustling noise close by me, and on looking round I saw close to my head a snake which had crawled up my chair. Not a little alarmed, I sprang up and killed the reptile, which was 6 feet long, but of the harmless sort. Still more unpleasant were the tarantulas, by the bites of which many of our men were rendered dangerously ill. To make us acquainted with all the amenities of the country, even an earthquake was not wanting, but this was so slight that only the piles of arms in front of the tents were thrown down. We had also an opportunity of seeing now and again the *fata morgana*, so well known in the East. One day, looking in the direction of the Black Sea, we saw in the sky the counterfeit of fortifications which an officer who knew the place at once pronounced with certainty to be those of Sevastopol. As this fortress was about 380 miles distant from our point of observation, this must have been a quite extraordinary case of refraction.

A favourite dish among the men as an addition to their soup was the flesh of the land turtle, which is here very plentiful. Great care was now taken with the men's food, and the indulgence in any spirits

beyond the ordinary ration of brandy was strictly forbidden. In spite of this, traders came every day into camp and tried to sell liquor to the soldiers behind the officers' backs. If such a one were caught, he was handed over to the commandant at San Stefano, and as often as not got an off-hand punishment into the bargain. I remember an Armenian, a tolerably educated man—at least he spoke French well—who was extremely obnoxious in this way. While the officers were at dinner, he, accompanied by several of his men carrying cans full of bad brandy and wine, used to sneak into camp and sell his wares to the men. One day, when officer of the day, I met him and ordered the contents of all the cans to be poured out on the ground, threatening him with severe punishment if he were so caught again. A few days later I again ran up against him. The moment he saw me he left his cans standing and took to his heels, but several soldiers sent after him soon caught him up and brought him back, and the well-dressed Armenian was sentenced by me to fifteen lashes, which were administered to him on the spot. He struggled hard and threatened me with all kinds of Turkish ministers, but it was no good. A few soldiers helped him in the necessary amount of undressing, and he received due

allowance meted out to him. At every stroke he cried out, "*Je me vengerai !*" but he did not revenge himself, and was never seen again.

Although the situation became more and more warlike, in time a lively mutual intercourse sprang up between our officers and those of the Turks on the other side, which was encouraged by the authorities. In each regiment certain picked officers were selected and sent over to make friends with the Turks, and find out all about their troops in general and the newly-thrown-up fortifications in particular. The Turks saw through the game at once, but received our officers in a most friendly manner, and some even were invited to visit the pashas. Once a comical circumstance happened. The Russian officers' servants, when they wear white clothing, have a uniform very similar to that worn by officers, but naturally without the shoulder-pieces. One of them, a very handsome young fellow of about twenty years of age, had dressed himself up in his best to pay a visit to a Turkish soldier he knew on outpost. The troops had, however, been changed, and he did not find his friend, and was about to come back when two Turkish officers came up to him and behaved so politely to him that he at once saw that they had taken him for an officer. It was

impossible to explain matters, and so he let himself be escorted by them to a large tent, where, to his horror, he saw a pasha sitting. The latter looked a little surprised but was also very polite, ordered coffee and a long chibuk to be handed to the man, who was getting more and more uneasy, and then began to converse with him through an interpreter. The talk was at first on general subjects as to the campaign, his regiment, etc., which he was able to reply to well enough, but at last the Pasha asked what rank he held. The man had by this time gained confidence a little, and thought that after all the politeness he had received it would never do to confess his low rank as an officer's servant, a confession which would have certainly caused him to be expelled from the tent, and probably would have subjected him to rough usage, so he unmovedly replied, "I am a captain." The Pasha expressed his astonishment at the quick promotion of his guest, who, after some more conversation, was trying to find an opportunity of retiring, when his own master entered. He was one of the above-mentioned officers who had already visited the Turkish lines, on which occasion the servant had made the acquaintance of the Turkish soldier whom he had attempted to visit. Great was the terror of the

soldier, and greater still the astonishment of the officer when he found his servant seated and in amiable conversation with a pasha. The poor fellow, however, threw such a beseeching look at the officer that the latter guessed that something unusual had happened, entered into the spirit of the thing, and offered his hand to his servant, who in a couple of words made him acquainted with the situation. Thus master and servant remained some time in the tent of the Turkish general and then returned together to the Russian camp. The man was soon well known in the whole regiment, and boasted frightfully to the other soldiers of his pasha, but did not long enjoy his triumph, for he was soon afterwards carried off by the typhus.

The Turkish officers did not fail to return our visits. At first they came singly, but afterwards they arrived in parties, and appeared to enjoy themselves very much among us, for they came much oftener than we cared. Some observed strictly the rule of their faith, which forbids the use of the juice of the grape, but most of them disregarded it, and, to the disgust of their stricter comrades, often presented us with disgusting scenes of drunkenness. I remember one case very well. On the invitation of some of our officers, the commander of one of the

regiments lying opposite us with three of his captains and several orderlies paid us a visit, the latter soon becoming the best of friends with our men. The Colonel at first declined to touch wine, but devoted himself all the more freely to brandy, which he, curiously enough, did not seem to count as a spirituous liquor. A few glasses of it helped him over all scruples of religion ; soon he partook of all sorts of wine, and the natural consequences ensued. At last he requested that our soldiers would sing him some Russian popular songs, which amused him much, and finally he had himself tossed in a blanket according to the Russian custom. The latter amusement finished him off, and he became extremely obstreperous, tried to kiss the hands of several officers, and cursed now in French and now in Turkish at the wretched state of his own army. The captains who accompanied him, although far from sober, were much annoyed at their colonel's behaviour, all the more so as it was before the eyes of both Russian and Turkish private soldiers. One of the latter, a negro, a handsome but wild-looking man, could not contain his anger. Although he never uttered a word, one could read in his grim features the anger which this breach of his religion and disparagement of his own army on the part of

his commander caused in his breast. The Colonel noticed this also, but instead of feeling ashamed, before we could stop him, he struck the negro twice in the face with his clenched fist. The man turned pale under his ebony skin, but not a muscle of his face showed what was passing in his mind. We at last succeeded in quieting the Colonel, and he lay down on the ground and was soon fast asleep. This was the negro's time; he drew his sharpened bayonet from its scabbard and threw himself with a bound on his sleeping colonel. It would have been all up with the latter had not one of our under-officers rushed after the negro and caught his arm just as he was about to strike. Other officers and soldiers rushed up and succeeded in disarming and binding the madman. After this hateful scene the Turkish officers took their leave, put their colonel, who knew nothing of the whole affair, on a cart which had been hastily sent for, and the negro, guarded by a Turkish soldier, on another, and so left our camp. The occurrence made such an impression on us that we resolved to invite no more Turkish officers. A few days afterwards we heard that the negro had been tried by court-martial and hanged, but whether the Colonel, whose fault it all was, was punished, we never could learn.



At that time we received news of the two attempts made on the life of the Emperor William. The indignation was general, and the joy was great when we heard of the safety of the Emperor after the first attempt. General von Tottleben ordered a thanksgiving service to be held in San Stefano, and at a parade of the troops in and near that place he paid special attention to Major von Lignitz as the representative on the spot of the Emperor William. The wish was very general that a deputation should be sent to Berlin to congratulate him on his escape, but Nobiling's attempt put an end to this idea.

While the Peace Congress was going on in Berlin we were once, quite unexpectedly, on the very verge of hostilities. The cause was peculiar. By order of General Tottleben, high posts of observation, such as are often used by the Cossacks and Circassians in the Caucasus, had been erected on several of the heights in our position. These consist of high wooden scaffolding, the upper story of which is formed by a platform of boards large enough for a man to stand upon. Several ladders lead up to this airy perch. Naturally a very good view was to be had from them, and our sentries could see into the Turkish intrenchments. These observatories had been up for several days when

suddenly Fuad Pasha, the victor of Elena, and now commander of the Turkish advanced line, one evening sent an envoy to General von Totleben with a request that they might be removed at once. If they were still standing by 10 A.M. next morning he had orders to open fire along the whole line. Naturally, General von Totleben refused this absolutely, at the same time saying that the first Turkish shot would be a sign for a general attack on Constantinople. We got in readiness for action during the night and morning, all troops in rear were ordered up by telegraph, and towards 8 A.M. an army of 100,000 men stood ready for battle. General von Totleben rode along the front of the troops, and was received by them with enthusiasm, the men being full of confidence. Everybody was delighted at the forthcoming battle, as we hoped to revenge ourselves on the hated English, for nobody doubted that they had been at the bottom of this business.

In the Turkish lines everything was on the move; large masses of troops were pouring to the front, and groups of horsemen, probably general officers and their staffs, were galloping backwards and forwards. Soon the muzzle of a gun was seen protruding through each embrasure, and then

nobody doubted that the battle was about to begin. At high tension we counted the minutes, and when 10 o'clock struck we expected every moment to see the well-known white cloud of smoke burst out from one or other of the works. But nothing of the sort happened, and now everybody began to wonder for what reason the Turks had delayed opening fire. Thus we lay for hours in glowing heat on the open fields, till at last at 6 P.M. we received orders to return to our former quarters. This we did not do without having suffered some loss, for several men had succumbed to sun-stroke. General Totleben sent a strongly-worded note on the subject to Constantinople, in consequence of which Fuad Pasha's action was disavowed by his government, and he was deprived of his command, whether actually or only on paper we never learned.

Fuad Pasha, the author of all the mischief, quite a young man, was one of the best of the Turkish generals, and very like Skobelev in his ways of thinking and acting. He was very friendly with the latter, even after this affair, and the two generals were constantly dining with one another.

Although Skobelev's merits were fully recognised, he was not very much respected, especially in the Guard

Corps, as his private character affected his fair fame as a general. In after years this feeling grew more and more intense, when Skobelev by all he did showed that he considered himself as the general of the coming Russian revolution, and in far-seeing circles his death in 1882 was considered a great piece of good fortune for Russia. He at this time commanded the troops in front of Constantinople lying alongside the Guards, and was trying hard to get a footing among the officers of that corps, in which he had formerly served, but he was so coldly received that in time he gave up the attempt. He openly expressed his anger at the proceedings of the Congress of Berlin, and in this every one was with him, as may be easily understood from a Russian point of view. Soldiers are not diplomats, and they therefore could not understand why all the conquests they had made, and which had been confirmed by the treaty of San Stefano, should for the most part be rendered of no avail. The disgust with Germany, which, according to the Russian view, had not sufficiently supported Russia, was now general, and soon turned into hatred. Skobelev renewed the acquaintance which we had made on the battlefield of Shipka, and visited me often, as, with his hatred for Germany, he united a profound

respect for her army, and was evidently very proud of the order *pour le mérite*, presented to him by the Emperor William. He often spoke of a war with Germany as unavoidable, and said, "Wherever we fight, we must always be twice as strong as the Germans."

As already mentioned, our visits to Constantinople had become less frequent, and generally we only went there on Fridays to attend the festival of the Selamlık. The Sultan on that day rides from his palace to a mosque to worship, and the occasion is always made one of great ceremony. The Turkish guards, with a band of negroes with silver instruments at their head, line the streets; and in the Padishah's staff may always be seen all the dignitaries of the Empire. The Sultan always took care that good places should be assigned to the Russian officers who attended as spectators, and always greeted them most kindly. He even gave orders to the more distinguished among them—probably the first time that orders have been given to a hostile army during the course of a war.

After the Fuad Pasha incident, the visits to Constantinople ceased almost entirely, but new attractions had been started in San Stefano, for a clever speculator had hastily run up a large theatre

there, and hired a very good company of Italian opera singers, who gave performances every day. In spite of high prices, the theatre was always full, and the speculator became a rich man. In his company there was a Russian songstress who naturally was received with especial enthusiasm. Before her benefit the officers subscribed a very handsome sum for her, and, in addition to other gifts, she was presented with a valuable casket made by the leading goldsmith in Constantinople, with the agreeable contents of 500 gold pieces, or about 4200 roubles at the prevailing exchange.

At the beginning of August it was decided, in consequence of the Berlin Treaty, that we should evacuate our positions in front of Constantinople, and that the English fleet should also withdraw from the Prince's Islands. After long negotiations as to which side was to move first, it was decided that the Russian Guard Corps was to be sent home by the Black Sea to Odessa, Nikolaiev, and Sevastopol. Before breaking up his army, however, General Totleben desired to give the Turks a military spectacle in the shape of a review near San Stefano. The Sultan was at first to have attended, but, in spite of all Oriental apathy, it went too much against the grain with him to review hostile

troops before the gates of his capital, and besides, as we shall see later on, reasons of personal safety prevented him from attending the parade. He therefore sent Mukhtar Pasha, who after his first successes against the Russians on the Asiatic theatre of war had received the title of Ghazi or The Victorious, and Strecker Pasha, to represent him.

In consequence of the number and variety of the troops, the parade was most imposing. In five long lines three army corps or 88,000 men were drawn up in a comparatively small space. Among them were the giants of the Guard Infantry, each regiment of which has men of a certain type of face, whose height formed a great contrast to that of the line troops under Radetski and Skobelev, the latter being also much worse clothed than their comrades of the Guard. Still of the line one could say in the words of Frederick the Great, "They look like gnomes, but they bite!" The various descriptions of cavalry, Lancers, Hussars, Dragoons, and Cossacks, especially the Cossacks of the Caucasus in their reddish Circassian dress with their silver-mounted arms, gave colour to the picture, and a peculiar type was represented by the *plastuni* or foot Cossacks, who had distinguished themselves on outpost duty and in minor operations, and had made themselves

especially dreaded by the enemy on account of their skill in shooting and in ambuscades. Hundreds of guns, which still showed traces of the hard service they had come through, completed the war-like picture. On all sides one heard generals greeting their troops and the resounding replies of these latter. Most of the senior officers wore alongside of their Russian orders the Prussian ones just presented by the Emperor William, the most distinguished wearing the order *pour le mérite*.

At 12 o'clock General von Totleben, accompanied by the two Turkish pashas and a brilliant staff, galloped up, and, as commander-in-chief of the armies in the field, was received with the Imperial hymn, which otherwise is only played for the Emperor. The inspection of the lines took more than an hour, and then the General took post on the right flank, and the troops marched past him. The pashas praised the appearance of the troops, and Strecker Pasha made rather a *faux pas*, which was much resented, when he turned to the commander of the first Guard Infantry Division, an officer who was extremely proud of his troops, and said, "I must say, your Excellency, that the troops look remarkably well; I could almost believe that I was looking at a Prussian Guard regiment." The



General's face beamed at the first compliment, but when the "almost" came out his manner changed visibly. The speech was repeated, and Strecker Pasha got into the black books of the whole Russian Guard.

I visited him afterwards, at his invitation, in his charming villa at Makrikioi, where he introduced me to his family. He confirmed all that Mehemed Ali had said about the Turkish army, and about the intrigues by which the latter was recalled from his command just as he was about to gain a success over the Tsarevich. Strecker Pasha also repeated that it would have been easy for the Russians, on the first day they appeared before Constantinople, to seize the capital before the arrival of the English fleet in the Bosphorus, and that nothing else was expected there. Even up to the last moment of our stay a *coup de main* was always held to be possible, and on the day of the great parade, to meet any such attempt, twenty-one battalions were drawn up in an intrenched position. This was the real reason why the Sultan did not attend the parade, and on that day Mukhtar and Strecker Pashas were almost looked upon as prisoners of war.

On the 18th August the festival of my regiment was celebrated. The men had turned the camp into

a perfect garden, and in it was held a religious service, which was attended by General von Tottleben and all the higher officers. Specially good dinners were provided for the men, and the officers, with the generals and the representatives of other regiments, celebrated the day in great style. After the Tsar's health had been drunk, General Radetski proposed the health of the Emperor William, which was drunk with real enthusiasm. So loved and honoured was he personally in the Russian army, that even the dislike of Germany, which arose later, made no change in these sentiments.

Towards the end of August our route arrived, and we were at last about to quit the ground where we had passed six instructive but weary months. The sight of our cemeteries, which we now handed over to the care of the Turks, told more than any words. On the whole our recollections were not joyous ones. Instead of having entered the Turkish capital as victors, as we had hoped to do, thousands of our comrades had sickened and died outside its walls, and a peace, which in no way corresponded to our expectations, had been the reward of our exertions. This feeling was especially strong amongst the officers, but it was shared by the men also. As we were about to embark, an old lance-

corporal turned round and, shaking his clenched fist at the shore we had left, said, "Please God, that even our children's children never revisit this cursed land!" Then he crossed himself and sprang on board. This circumstance has imprinted itself on my memory, and well characterizes the feelings of our men. As we were pushing off from the shore, with the bands playing the national hymn, our soldiers burst out into thundering cheers, in which all the officers joined.

On the 31st August at 6 P.M. we left San Stefano, and at 8 P.M. entered the Bosphorus, in which we had to pass the night, as navigation is forbidden after dark. Many officers embraced this opportunity of paying a last visit to the Turkish capital. At dawn we continued our voyage, and the wonderful panorama of the banks of the Bosphorus passed before our eyes. The sight of Buyukdere called up recollections of the first day of our arrival before Constantinople, on which we had hoped that that important point would certainly fall into our hands. Now strong batteries, armed with guns of large calibre, had been erected opposite it. For a short time an opening in the hills gave us a view of our position before the capital; with a field-glass our fortifications could be made out quite distinctly, and for a few

minutes we felt very sad at the sight, as a prisoner is said to feel when he leaves the cell in which he has long been confined. After a tolerably rough passage across the Black Sea, we disembarked on Russian soil at Sevastopol on the 3rd September. With what rejoicings was the first sight of home received! The first word of command after landing was, "Caps off for prayer!" and from the expression of the men's faces and the pious way in which they crossed themselves, one could easily see what feelings animated them.

We remained several days in Sevastopol, and employed our time in visiting the sights of the town which has made such a name for itself in Russian military history. It then presented much the same aspect as at the close of the siege, twenty-three years before. Whole streets lay in ruins, and in the environs the positions and works of the allies could be distinctly traced, their trenches and batteries being mostly still extant. The Malakhov Tower, which played such a prominent part in the siege, and the storming of which by MacMahon decided the fate of the town, was still what it had then been reduced to—an enormous heap of ruins, among the bushes covering which human bones could still be found without having to seek far.

This terrible siege was especially forcibly brought to mind by a monument, which is probably unique of its kind—a cemetery which bears the characteristic name of the “Grave of the hundred thousand.” In it are buried 100,514 officers and men who were killed or died of wounds during the siege. Only two generals, whose names were closely connected with the history of the siege, Prince Gorchakov, the commander-in-chief, and General Khrulev, had afterwards been buried there, and in the year 1884 General Count Totleben, the heroic defender of Sevastopol, was also laid to rest in it. The cemetery, which was begun during the siege, is now a beautiful park. Every day the bodies of those who had fallen used to be collected in a square in the town, a burning candle in the hand of each, and, after the priest had pronounced the blessing, they were ferried over the harbour to this churchyard. The men were buried in graves holding from 200 to 400, so-called “mounds of brotherhood,” the officers in separate graves with wooden crosses marked with their names. After the peace, the Emperor Alexander II. put up a gravestone to every officer, and one on each of the men’s graves. These are maintained with great care, and the relatives have the right of having them decorated at the expense of

the State. The finest monument is, however, that erected to the memory of all who fell, a church in the shape of a stone pyramid. Outside of it, on marble slabs, the loss in killed of each unit is shown, many of the regiments having more than 4000 of them, and inside, on similar slabs, are the names of all the officers who perished, 910 in number, including seven generals and three admirals. From the top of the monument there is a splendid view over the surrounding battlefields. When we visited this monument there was a large camp of Turkish prisoners of war close by the cemetery ; the men were full of excitement, as they expected soon to be taken back to their own country.

A few days after our arrival at Sevastopol, the whole of the Guard Corps was reviewed by the Emperor Alexander, who had come from his summer residence, Livadia, for the purpose. It was almost a year since the Emperor, who had returned to Russia immediately after the fall of Plevna, had seen his Guards. The excitement of that time and the disappointment at the results of the Congress of Berlin had left their mark on him, and it was with pain that the Guards noticed that their sovereign looked much older and appeared to be dejected, and, in spite of all enthusiasm, it was evident that every-

body felt this. The Emperor thanked the troops in moving words, and afterwards specially addressed the officers and the knights of St. George. To me he spoke a few kind words in Russian, and was evidently pleased when I answered him in that language. Afterwards, also, he never missed an opportunity of taking notice of me, which often caused me to be regarded with envy. He then announced all sorts of promotions; several officers were appointed generals of the Imperial suite or Imperial aides-de-camp, three of my own regiment, the commanders of the 1st Battalion and 1st Company, and the regimental adjutant, being among the latter. All this, however, could not clear away the depression we all felt, and the review appeared more like the first act of a time of difficulty and danger than the last of a victorious campaign.

Our return journey to St. Petersburg also did not come up to our expectations. Instead of a hearty reception, at all the large towns we passed through on the railway, with few exceptions, we were regarded with exasperating indifference. Kharkov and Kursk were especially notable in this matter, for on our arrival at these places the stations were absolutely empty, as if intentionally. What a difference from the return of the German troops

from France! Although the results of the war had not come up to the expectations of the people, and especially of the educated portion of it, there was no reason for venting this feeling on the troops, who had done their duty to the fullest extent, and had willingly laid down life and health for their country.

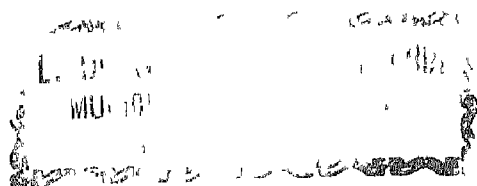
In St. Petersburg there was no entry of the whole of the Guard Corps, but each regiment came in separately, and was received by the Tsarevich. The reception was therefore less ceremonious than we had expected. St. Petersburg, however, welcomed back its Guards in a worthy and hearty manner, and everything was done to express to officers and men the thanks of the citizens.

A few days after their arrival, the Guards were reduced to the peace footing; the greater portion of the older soldiers who had gone through the whole campaign returned to their homes, and instead of the active life of the camp began the monotonous routine of garrison duty. Soon afterwards commenced that dark time of interior troubles and terrible crimes which reached their pitch in the murder of the Emperor.

For me, however, began a life among completely new surroundings, in struggling with the difficulties

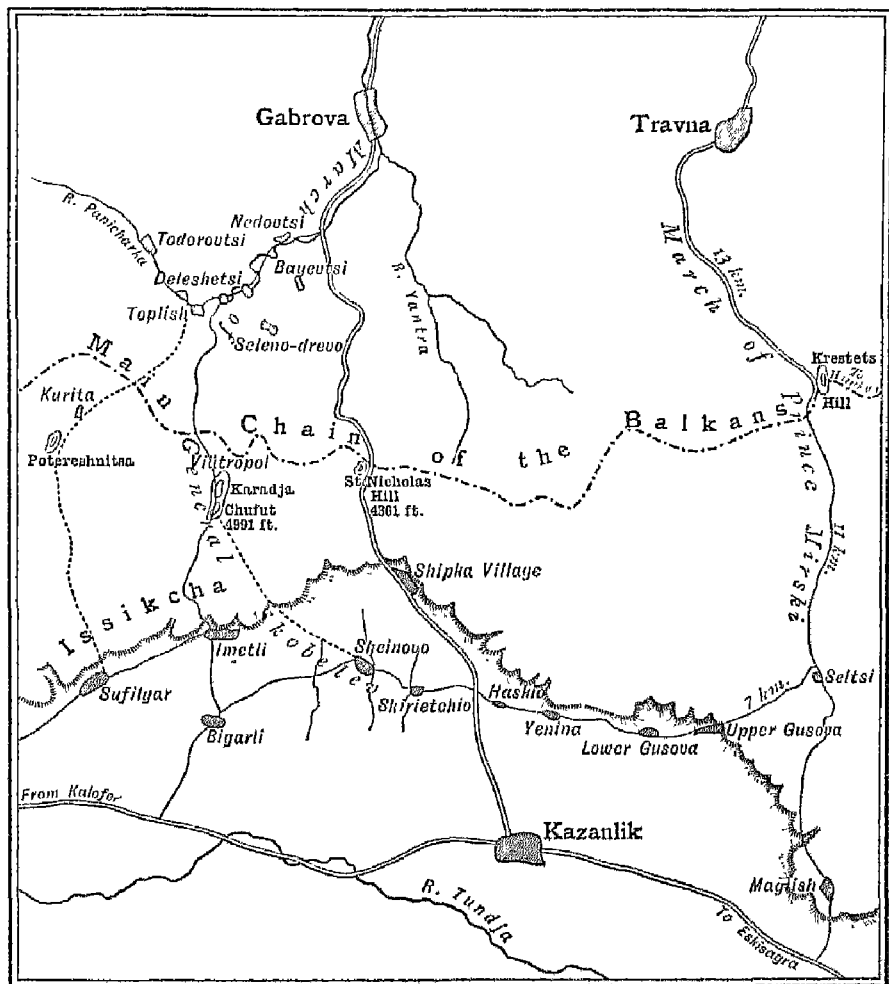


of which, in the first few years, I had more trouble than on the ice-fields of the Balkans or under the burning sun of Constantinople. In any case, however, I can look back with thankfulness on the first period of my service in the Russian army.



THE END

# SCENE OF OPERATIONS



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